THE BARRETTS OF WIMPOLE STREET

Acting edition of the play as used in the Guthrie McClintic production with Katharine Cornell

★

COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY RUDOLF BESIER

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SOUND EFFECT RECORD

The following sound effect record, which may be used in connection with this play, can be procured through the Dramatists Play Service, Inc., at $2.30, which price includes packing and shipping.

No. 5008 Horse and carriage

The Barretts of Wimpole Street was first produced, in the United States, by Katharine Cornell in Cleveland, Ohio, on January 29, 1931, and presented by her at the Empire Theater, New York, on February 9, 1931, under the direction of Guthrie McClintic. The cast was as follows:

Doctor Chambers ..... George Riddell
Elizabeth Barrett Moulton-Barrett ..... Katharine Cornell
Wilson ..... Brenda Forbes
Henrietta Moulton-Barrett ..... Margaret Barker
Arabel Moulton-Barrett ..... Joyce Carey
Octavius Moulton-Barrett ..... John Halloran
Septimus Moulton-Barrett ..... William Whithead
Alfred Moulton-Barrett ..... Vernon Downing
Charles Moulton-Barrett ..... Frederick Voight
Henry Moulton-Barrett ..... Basil Harvey
George Moulton-Barrett ..... Leslie Denison
Edward Moulton-Barrett ..... Charles Waldron
Bella Hedley ..... Dorothy Mathews
Henry Bevan ..... John D. Seymour
Robert Browning ..... Brian Aherne
Doctor Ford-Waterlow ..... Oswald Marshall
Captain Surtees Cook ..... John Buckler
* Flush ..... By Himself

SCENE

The scene is the bed-sitting room of Elizabeth Barrett at 50 Wimpole Street, in London, in 1845.

ACT I

Scene 1: The evening of the 19th of May.
Scene 2: The afternoon of the following day.

ACT II

Three months later.

ACT III

Scene 1: Some weeks later.
Scene 2: The following week.
(During Scene 2 the lights will be lowered to denote the passing of a few hours.)

* Flush is a dog and may be omitted. See note on page 4.

NOTES ON PRODUCTION, COSTUMES, ETC.

The present edition of *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* follows the Stage Manager's prompt script as used in the original Guthrie McClintic production of the play. The script indicates throughout all necessary details regarding the set, entrances, business, and exits of all the characters. The photograph used as frontispiece to the present edition offers a sufficient guide to those in charge of preparing the setting. It should be mentioned, however, that both the setting and the stage business may be modified to some extent, and certainly simplified.

Please note that the original production of this play reproduced accurately the Victorian atmosphere in which the action takes place, and that a great many articles of furniture and properties were, in this production, used purely for atmospheric effect. For those groups unable to secure period furniture and other objects, it is enough to say that all that is basically necessary, by way of furniture and properties, is the creation of a mood which shall suggest, rather than photographically reproduce, a mood of upper middle-class comfort of the sort we associate with English Victorianism. Since there is only one entrance to the setting, and since there is no difficult stage business indicated, the problem of directing should not prove too serious for any competent director.

While the costumes used in the original production were very accurate and even elaborate, it is by no means imperative that the costumes used by nonprofessionals should be either elaborate or entirely authentic. Again we stress the point that the mood of the play is best established by suggesting the period rather than reproducing it. Considerable leeway is therefore permitted in the choice of costumes.

What has been said here about costumes and setting is also applicable to the matter of properties. There is appended, at the end of this book, a copy of the property list as used in the original production. Here again considerable leeway is permitted the nonprofessional director and attention is called to the fact that properties, both furniture and hand props, may easily be reduced.

In the original production, the dog "Flush" was an actor. But since to train a dog is sometimes even more difficult than to train a human actor, it is suggested that the dog should not be allowed on stage. This slight change will necessitate an equally slight change in business and dialogue.

THE BARRETTS OF WIMPOLE STREET

ACT I

SCENE 1: *Elizabeth Barrett's bed-sitting room, in Wimpole Street, London.*

It is a large square room, comfortably furnished in the English furniture of the period. There is a wide door with massive iron lock on its inner side, and with brass door-knobs, and large brass key in the lock, down R. *A large fireplace with a marble mantel is opposite at* L. *At back the wall is somewhat bowed outward to form a large bay, in which are spaced equally three large, recessed windows, with double-hung, square-paned sash, and panelling in the recesses below the windows. Through door* L. *is seen the hall with stairway leading up toward back. Through windows at back are seen the small iron balcony railings outside each one of them, and the flowers in the boxes just outside the sills. In the distance can be seen the upper stories of the houses on the opposite sides of the street, and a corner of the outer brick wall of this house; vines are seen climbing up outside* R. *and* L. *windows. A large wardrobe cabinet with mirror door is against wall at* R. *above door, a small square tea-table is against back wall up* R., *on it books and pamphlets. The windows at back are fitted with shades, long lace curtains, sash curtains on lower sash, and long drapes with pull cords. At back up* R. C. *is a small open-shelved secretary desk filled with books, and with desk top also littered with books and pamphlets. Between windows, before this desk, is a straight walnut chair with upholstered seat. Before window up back* L. C. *is a fine mahogany dressing table with swinging oval back.* L. C. *is a fine mahogany dressing table with swinging oval*

mirror, on which are a lace cover, and some few pomade jars, toilet bottles, glass tray, tumblers, etc. Against back wall up L. *is a round low dog basket on floor with old cushion inside. Beside it a stack of books, also on floor. Up* L. *against side wall is a large secretary desk with glass doors, filled with books. On mantel at* L. *are a couple of brass candlesticks and candles in glass chimneys, and a small white marble statuette of a half-open shell. A round gold-framed mirror in black shadow box is on wall above. In fireplace below is a built-in black iron grate with andirons, and low brass fender rail. A brass stand with tongs, shovel, and poker stands above it, and black, brass-mounted scuttle of coal is below. Also above is a small square tabourette or stand of mahogany. A tapestry bell-pull hangs from ceiling below fireplace. Down* L. *is a carved leg stool, with round tapestry-upholstered seat. A walnut straight chair with upholstered seat is before dressing table up* L. C. *On back wall over small desk up* R. C. *hangs a square tapestry in gold frame. Over drop-leaf table up* L. C. *is a pair of hanging book-shelves filled with books, and on wall beneath them hangs a small plaster plaque of a man's head. Over stool down* L. *is a duplicate pair of hanging book-shelves with books, and a framed plaster plaque on wall beneath them. On top of wardrobe cabinet* R., *and on top of large desk up* L., *are two plaster busts of male heads. A large table desk stands up and down stage at* R. *of* C. *with a green-figured upholstered bench at* R. *of it. Below this table is a large upholstered armchair, and a little up* R. C. *at* L. *of this table is another armchair with carved arms and upholstered seat and back with cushion in it. A large duplicate armchair to that below table is at* C. *angled towards couch at* L. C. *Table top is littered with piles of books, a copy of newspaper, large portfolio of leather, with paper and envelopes, a large leather-covered ink-well, green feather quill pen, and a black sand-shaker. At* L. C. *is a large upholstered couch, with low straight back, and sharply upturned head and foot. On this are a number of pillows and couch covers and shawls. In hall off* R. *is seen a small oblong table against wall, on which*

is a lighted candle in glass stand with red tinted glass shade, an old portrait of woman's head in old gold frame is on wall above, and a straight rush-bottom chair with yellow flowered cushion is at either end above and below.
TIME: *Evening, about 8:30 P. M.*
AT RISE: *Shade on* R. *window is down, and drapes on all windows are closely drawn. The books from tea table up* R. *have been piled on floor up* R. *and table is down* L. *before couch. On it is a tray with the remains of a light meal, and a glass full of porter. The stand or tabourette from above fireplace* L. *has been brought forward to head of couch, and on it is a lighted candle in lamp, of painted china with bronze base, and rough globe-shape blue tinted glass chimney. A duplicate lighted lamp is on table* R. C. *There are discovered Elizabeth's dog, Flush,*[1] *a tiny cocker-spaniel, in basket up* L. *Elizabeth, reclining on couch* L. C. *amidst cushions and covers, and Dr. Chambers, who is standing above couch, watch in hand, taking her pulse.*

CHAMBERS. (*Dropping her wrist and pocketing watch, above couch.*) H-m-m! Yes! It's this increasingly low vitality of yours that worries me. No life in you—none. What are we going to do about it?

ELIZABETH. (*Reclining on couch.*) Well, Doctor, if you shut a person up in one room for years on end, you can't very well expect to find her bursting with life and vigor. Why not prescribe something really exciting for a change?

CHAM. Exciting, eh?

ELIZ. A gallop three times around the Park every morning—dumb-bell exercises—a long sea-voyage.

CHAM. How I wish I could, my dear!

ELIZ. It's funny to think of it now, but you know, Doctor, as a child I was a regular tomboy.

CHAM. Yes, I've heard all about that—and mentally you're a tomboy still! To tell you the truth, my dear Miss Eliz . . . (*Crosses down* R. *of couch, sits chair* C.) I'm not at all sure that brain of yours isn't altogether too active. Still hard at Greek?

[1] The Dog may be omitted throughout. Only a few lines and bits of business need be changed.

ELIZ. Oh, not more than two or three hours a day.
CHAM. Are you engaged in any literary work at the moment?
ELIZ. Only a few articles for the "Athenaeum," and other papers.
CHAM. The "Athenaeum"—dear, dear! Now, why not give all these heavy labors a rest, and turn your mind to something light and easy for a bit? Poetry? You're not neglecting your poetry, I hope?
ELIZ. (*On couch* L. C.) Meaning something light and easy? (*Laughs.*) Oh, Doctor, I shudder to think what my life would be like if I hadn't a turn for scribbling and study.
CHAM. H-m—yes. Quite so. Yes. And this isn't the liveliest house for anyone to live in—let alone an invalid.
ELIZ. No, I suppose not. I wish Papa were a happier man! It would make such a world of difference to all of us.
CHAM. Happier, eh? It's no business of mine, but when a man has good health, plenty of money, and a jolly family, I can't see why he should make life a burden to himself and others. Well, as I said, it's no concern of mine. But *you are*, my dear, and a very worrying concern too. Of course the winter has been abominable, and these spring months are always trying. The fact is, you oughtn't to live in England at all. Italy's the place for you.
ELIZ. *Italy!* Oh, Doctor, what a heavenly dream!
CHAM. But if only I could prescribe some sort of change for you —something—anything to get you out of these dismal surroundings for a time. Tell me now, Miss Elizabeth, have you ventured on your feet at all lately?
ELIZ. No, hardly at all. I rather lost my nerve after that fall I had last Christmas. Papa, or one of my brothers, carries me from my bed to the sofa. Sometimes when I'm feeling venturesome, my maid supports me across the room.
CHAM. (*Rising, crossing above sofa.*) Feeling venturesome at the moment?
ELIZ. (*Reclining on couch* L. C.) Not particularly.
CHAM. (*Crossing down* L. *around head of sofa.*) All the same, I think we'll try a step or two. (*Crossing to her down* L., *takes both her hands.*) Quietly now—slowly—there's no hurry. (*With his help she gets to her feet.*) There we are. (*She sways a little, he supports her.*) Feeling giddy, eh?
ELIZ. A little ——

CHAM. Close your eyes and lean against me—it will pass in a minute. (*After a moment she raises her head.*) Better?
ELIZ. Yes—oh, yes ——
CHAM. Take your time now, and step carefully. Don't be nervous —I won't let go your hand. (*She takes a few faltering steps, crossing* R., *as he walks backward before her, holding her hands.*) No —don't look at the floor. Look straight ahead. That's first rate—that's fine—splendid—splendid —— (*After taking half a dozen steps she falters and sways.*)
ELIZ. Oh, Doctor! (*He quickly catches her in his arms, and carries her back, placing her on sofa again.*)
CHAM. Feeling faint?
ELIZ. No, it's just my knees—they don't seem able to—to support me.
CHAM. (*Replacing covers, standing down* L. *of sofa.*) Well, if they can't do that, they're a pretty useless pair! (*Walks around back of sofa, pats her shoulder.*) Why, there's no more to you than to a five-year-old. How's your appetite? Just peck at your food, I suppose? (*Crosses, sits* C. R. *of sofa again.*)
ELIZ. (*Reclining on sofa.*) I always try to eat what I'm given, but I'm never very hungry. (*With sudden animation, half sitting up.*) Oh, Doctor, that reminds me! Do you remember Papa suggesting that a kind of beer called porter might do me good?
CHAM. Yes—and an excellent suggestion, too.
ELIZ. Oh, but forgive me—it was nothing of the kind! I have to drink it twice a day, out of a pewter tankard, and my life in consequence has become one long misery.
CHAM. God bless my soul!
ELIZ. I am not exaggerating—*one long misery!*
CHAM. But, my dear child——! There's nothing I enjoy more than a pint of porter with my steak or chops at breakfast.
ELIZ. With your breakfast! All I can say is that to me porter is entirely horrible! Horrible to look at—more horrible to smell—and most horrible to drink! Surely, something one abominates so intensely can't possibly do one any good! It's no use my appealing to Papa—especially as the dreadful idea originated with him. But if *you*, dear, dear Doctor Chambers, were to suggest to him that something else—anything—I don't mind what it is—might be equally efficacious ——?
CHAM. (*Laughing.*) You poor little lady! But of course I will!

ELIZ. Oh, thank you a thousand times!
CHAM. (*Seated* C. R. *of sofa.*) What do you say to a couple of glasses of hot milk as a substitute?
ELIZ. (*On sofa.*) I dislike milk, but I'll drink it all day long—if only you'll rescue me from porter! (*There is a knock at door* R.) Come in! (*Wilson, Elizabeth's maid, enters* R., *leaving door open.*) Yes, Wilson?
WILSON. (*Crossing to* C.) Begging your pardon, Miss —— (*Turning to Chambers.*) But the Master wishes most particularly to see you before you leave, sir.
CHAM. Of course—of course. (*Rising, looking at watch.*) And high time I were off—is your Master in his study?
WILSON. Yes, sir. (*Crosses* R. *to door, waits there for Chambers.*)
CHAM. (*Crossing to Elizabeth* L. C. *above sofa.*) Well, good-bye, my dear Miss Elizabeth, good-bye. (*Takes her hand.*)
ELIZ. Good-bye, Doctor. (*In a low voice.*) And you won't forget?
CHAM. Eh?
ELIZ. (*Spelling.*) P-O-R-T-E-R!
CHAM. (*Laughing.*) No—no. I'll speak to him about it now.
ELIZ. (*On sofa.*) Thank you—thank you!
CHAM. (*Laughing.*) Good night —— (*To Wilson as he crosses to door* R.) You needn't see me downstairs—I know my way.
WILSON. Thank you, sir. (*Chambers exits, leaving door open.*) I am just going to post your letter, Miss Ba—shall I take Flush with me?
ELIZ. (*Excitedly, ignoring question, points at glass of porter.*) Quick, Wilson—away with it!
WILSON. What, Miss?
ELIZ. I hadn't the courage to drink it at dinner. I have been putting off the dreadful moment as long as I could.
WILSON. (*Turning to look at porter, then back at Elizabeth.*) Your porter, Miss?
ELIZ. And now dear Doctor Chambers says I needn't drink it at all. Take it away. Quick! Quick! And never mention the word porter to me again!
WILSON. (*Crossing to her.*) Lor, Miss—very good, Miss. But since you 'aven't 'ad your porter, won't you ——?
ELIZ. (*Covering her ears.*) I told you never to mention the word again! Take it away, please. Please.
WILSON. (*A little alarmed, crosses up* L., *picks up Flush, crosses,*

puts him out of door.) Very good, Miss Ba. Come, Flush. (*Elizabeth starts laughing, as Henrietta Moulton-Barrett runs quickly in. Wilson crosses with Flush.*)

HENRIETTA. (*Crossing towards* C.) What are you laughing at, Ba?

ELIZ. (*On sofa.*) Wilson thinks I've gone mad.

WILSON. (*Re-entering.*) Mad, Miss? What things you do say!

ELIZ. (*Still laughing.*) Will you, or won't you, take away that—that black beer?

WILSON. Very good, Miss Ba. (*Crosses, gets tray, exits with it, closing door.*)

HENR. (*Crosses toward Elizabeth, stands* R. C. *by chair.*) I don't know why you're laughing, Ba, and you needn't tell me. Only don't stop. Go on laughing till midnight. I'll tickle you if you think you can't keep it up without being helped. Oh, Ba, dinner was awful—awful! (*Sits on foot of sofa facing her.*)

ELIZ. Was Papa ——?

HENR. Yes, he was. He was in one of his moods—the worst kind. The nagging mood is bad enough, the shouting mood is worse, but don't you think the dumb mood is the worst of all?

ELIZ. Yes, perhaps—but they all frighten me.

HENR. I don't believe there were more than a dozen remarks all through dinner—and most of them were frozen off at the tips. Papa would just turn his glassy eyes on the speaker. You know? For the last twenty minutes or so the only sound in the room was the discreet clatter of knives and forks. Directly dinner was over he ordered the port to be taken to his study, and thank Heaven he followed it almost at once.

ELIZ. Doctor Chambers is with him now.

HENR. Oh, Ba, I do hope for all our sakes his report of you isn't too good.

ELIZ. But, Henrietta ——!

HENR. (*All contrition, moves and sits on sofa* R. *of Elizabeth, takes her hand.*) Forgive me, dearest—it was odious of me to say that. You know I didn't mean it, don't you?

ELIZ. Of course I do, you silly child. But what you said makes Papa an inhuman monster. And that's wickedly untrue. In his own way he cares for all his children.

HENR. (*Rises.*) In his own way! No, dear, what I meant was that good news of any kind would be sure to aggravate him in his

present mood. (*Sits* R. *of her on sofa again.*) I don't know why it should, but it does. (*Arabel Moulton-Barrett enters, closing door.*)
ARABEL. Oh, you're here, Henrietta. I've been looking for you everywhere. Papa has just sent you this note from his study.
HENR. Me? Oh, dear! When he starts sending notes from his study, look out for squalls! (*Opens note, reads. Arabel sits chair* R. C. *of sofa.*) "I have heard this morning that your Aunt and Uncle Hedley, and your cousin Bella have arrived in London earlier than was expected. They are staying at Fenton's Hotel. Your cousin Bella and her fiancé, Mr. Bevan, propose to call on you tomorrow at three o'clock. You and Arabel will, of course, be here to receive them, and if Elizabeth is well enough you will bring them upstairs to see her. I have written to invite your Uncle and Aunt and Cousin to dinner next Thursday—Papa." Well!
ARABEL. I understand now why Papa seemed so—so displeased at dinner.
HENR. Vile-tempered, you mean!
ARABEL. Is it necessary always to use the ugliest word?
HENR. Yes, Arabel—when you're describing the ugliest thing! (*To Elizabeth.*) Oh, but Papa is quite impossible! He got this letter from the Hedleys at breakfast. Why couldn't he have spoken then? Why couldn't he have spoken at dinner? Heaven knows he had time enough!
ARABEL. I'm afraid he was displeased.
HENR. Displeased! Oh, of course we all know that he hates being ordinarily polite to anyone, and now he's simply bound to show some kind of hospitality to the Hedleys. No wonder he was—displeased! (*Rising.*) What enrages me is that I was expecting a friend tomorrow at three, and now I shall have to put him off somehow. (*Crosses* C. *down* R. *to Arabel.*)
ARABEL. (*Archly, stopping her.*) Why?
HENR. (*Turning to Arabel.*) Why what?
ARABEL. Why must you put your friend off? Bella and her fiancé won't eat your friend.
HENR. What—what business is that of yours?
ARABEL. But, Henrietta ——
HENR. (*Rising, crossing* R.) I hate people prying into my affairs! (*Exits, slamming door.*)
ARABEL. (*Distressed, takes a couple of steps after her, then turns back toward Elizabeth.*) Oh dear! Oh dear! What can be the

matter with her tonight? Usually she quite enjoys being quizzed about Captain Surtees Cook.
ELIZ. Perhaps she may have begun to take his attentions seriously.
ARABEL. Oh, Ba, I hope not! (*Sits on same chair* R. C. *of sofa.*) You remember when young Mr. Palfrey wanted to marry her two years ago—those dreadful scenes with Papa?
ELIZ. I should rather forget them.
ARABEL. Oh, why can't Henrietta realize that if there's one thing Papa will never permit, it's marriage in the family! It doesn't worry me at all, as gentlemen never attracted me in that way. Nor you, dear.
ELIZ. (*With a laugh.*) Me?
ARABEL. (*Rising, goes to her above sofa.*) Oh, of course, today, anything of that kind is quite out of the question, my poor darling —Papa or no Papa. But even when you were younger and stronger, I don't ever remember your having had little affairs with gentlemen.
ELIZ. Perhaps the gentlemen never gave me the chance!
ARABEL. Oh, but you were quite pretty as a young girl.
ELIZ. What is Captain Surtees Cook like? Is he nice?
ARABEL. (*Walking* C.) Yes, I think so. Yes, quite nice. But he never says much. He just sits and looks at Henrietta.
ELIZ. She's very lovely.
ARABEL. But Papa would never countenance any kind of understanding between them. You know that as well as I do.
ELIZ. Poor Henrietta —— (*Henrietta re-enters, closing door, crosses quickly to Arabel and kisses her.*)
HENR. I'm sorry.
ARABEL. Oh, my dear, I never meant to annoy you. (*Rising, going to meet her.*)
HENR. You didn't—(*They kiss, then with a laugh.*)—you *displeased* me. Oh, I'm Papa's daughter, all right! (*Crosses up* C. *above chair.*)
ELIZ. Henrietta, when Bella and her fiancé call tomorrow, Arabel will bring them up here to see me, and you can entertain Captain Cook in the drawing-room. (*Arabel looks distressed, faces upstage at chair* L. *of desk.*)
HENR. (*Going over, crosses to* L. *above sofa.*) What a lovely thing it is to be a genius! You darling!

ELIZ. But I must have the room to myself at half-past three, as Mr. Robert Browning is calling then.

HENR. No!

ARABEL. (*Turns, starts to Elizabeth.*) But I thought —— } (*Together.*)

HENR. Of course I know you've been corresponding with Mr. Browning for months. But then you write to so many literary people whom you absolutely refuse to see.

ARABEL. Has Papa given his permission?

ELIZ. Of course.

HENR. But why? Why have you made an exception of Mr. Browning? I've heard he's wonderfully handsome, but ——

ELIZ. Oh, Henrietta, you're incorrigible!

ARABEL. I know he's been most anxious to call. Mr. Kenyon told me so.

HENR. But you said yourself only a short time ago that you didn't intend to receive him.

ELIZ. I didn't—and I don't particularly want to now.

HENR. But why?

ELIZ. Because, my dear, at heart I'm as vain as a peacock! You see, when people admire my work, they are very likely to picture the poetess as stately and beautiful as her verses. And it's dreadfully humiliating to disillusion them.

HENR. Don't be silly, Ba. You're very interesting and picturesque.

ELIZ. (*Laughing as Arabel sits down.*) Isn't that how guidebooks usually describe a ruin? As a matter of fact, Mr. Browning has been so insistent that out of sheer weariness I've given way. But I don't want an audience to witness the tragedy of his disillusionment! So mind, Arabel, Bella and her Mr. Bevan must be out of the room before he arrives. (*A knock at door* R.) Come in. (*Octavius Moulton-Barrett enters* R., *closing door after him. He stammers slightly.*) Come in, Occy.

OCTAVIUS. (*Crosses to Elizabeth.*) I've just come to see how you are, and to wish you g-good night. Doctor satisfied?

ELIZ. Oh, yes, I think so.

HENR. (*Handing him Papa's note.*) Read that, Octavius. (*He walks to* L. *to read under the light.*)

ARABEL. (*While he is reading.*) Oh dear! I quite forgot that I was to attend a meeting on the Chinese Wesleyan Mission at Exeter Hall tomorrow afternoon.

OCT. (*Flourishing letter.*) Well, you can't attend it! This is undoubtedly a Royal d-decree.
HENR. (*To Arabel.*) "Given at our study at 50 Wimpole Street on this nineteenth day of May 1845. God save Papa!" (*She walks up* R., *then to* C.)
ARABEL. (*Reprovingly, rising and going behind chair* R.) Henrietta, dear! (*A knock at door* R.)
ELIZ. Come in. (*Septimus Moulton-Barrett enters. He is a year older than Octavius.*) Well, Septimus?
SEPTIMUS. (*Crossing to Elizabeth.*) How are you, Ba? (*Kisses her.*) I hope the Doctor is satisfied with you?
ELIZ. Oh, yes, I think so.
OCT. I say, Septimus, the Hedleys are d-dining here in force next Thursday. (*Arabel crosses* R. *to sit in desk chair.*)
SEPT. By Jove! Not really? (*Octavius gives him letter, he stands extreme* L. *below head of sofa. Octavius moves up* L. *A knock at door* R.)
ELIZ. Come in. (*Alfred Moulton-Barrett enters. He is older than Septimus.*) Come in, Alfred.
ALF. (*Crossing to lower end of sofa.*) And how's our dear Ba tonight? I hope the Doctor was happy about you?
ELIZ. Oh, yes, I think so. (*Another knock at door* R.) Come in. (*Charles Moulton-Barrett enters.*) Come in, Charles.
CHARLES. (*Enters above chair, crosses, stands behind and above sofa. Alfred crosses up* R., *sits on arm chair.*) How are you feeling tonight, Ba? I hope Doctor Chambers' report was good?
ELIZ. Oh, yes, I think so. (*Another knock at door* R.) Come in. (*Henry Moulton-Barrett enters. He is slightly older than Charles.*) Come in, Henry.
HENRY. (*Crosses to below sofa.*) Well, Ba? How are you, my dear? (*Kisses her.*) Was the Doctor pleased with his patient?
ELIZ. Oh, yes, I think so.
HENRY. (*Standing downstage side of head of sofa.*) That's good. I must say, I think you are looking a little better. What do you say, Charles?
CHARLES. Eh? (*Septimus goes up to give Octavius the letter. Tells him in an undertone to take it to Henrietta up* C.)
HENRY. Looking better, don't you know. More herself, what? (*Another knock at door* R.)

ELIZ. Come in. (*George Moulton-Barrett enters, closing door. He is slightly older than Henry.*) Come in, George.
GEORGE. (*Crossing to below sofa.*) Well, and how's Ba tonight? (*Kisses her.*) The Doctor's just been, hasn't he? I'm afraid he wasn't too pleased with you. (*Backs to down* R. *of foot of sofa.*)
ELIZ. Oh, yes, I think so—I mean—why?
GEORGE. You're not looking so well. Is she, Henry?
HENRY. On the contrary, I think she's looking considerably better. So does Charles—don't you, Charles?
CHARLES. Eh?
OCT. (*Crossing down to back of sofa* R. *between Charles and Septimus.*) I say, George, the Hedleys have arrived unexpectedly in town. Bella and her swain are c-calling on the girls tomorrow afternoon, and on Thursday, she and her parents are d-dining here, in state.
HENRY. Dining *here!*
ALF. (*Rising.*) Not here! } (*Together.*)
SEPT. Not really!
ALF. (*Crossing* R. *below* C. *chair.*) Well, I hope they'll enjoy their dinner as much as we did ours tonight!
SEPT. You have met this Mr. Bevan, haven't you, Alfred?
ALF. I have.
SEPT. What is he like?
HENR. Yes?
ALF. Pompous ass. But warm—a very warm fellow. Ten thousand pounds a year, if he has a penny ——
HENR. No!
ALF. And ten thousand more when his grandmother dies.
ARABEL. (*Walking* C.) Oh!
HENR. (*Crossing* R. *to foot of sofa.*) It's grossly unfair! (*To Arabel.*) What has Bella done to deserve such luck?
OCT. Alfred says he's a pompous ass.
HENR. Oh, that's jealousy! No man with ten thousand a year can be a pompous ass!
HENRY. I think it's just possible that you'll all be interested to hear that Papa is going to Plymouth on business next week, and —— (*Excited exclamations from all but Elizabeth.*)
HENR. Go on, Henry, and ——?
HENRY. And that he's not expected to return for at least a fortnight. (*Smiles and murmurs of satisfaction.*)

HENR. (*Flings arms around George's neck, kisses him.*) Oh, George! How wonderful! How glorious! Do you polk, George?
GEORGE. (*Turning up stage.*) Don't be childish!
HENR. Well, I polk. (*She dances the polka around room, while humming "Little Brown Jug," all the brothers join in the humming. Henry moves up above fireplace. Others look on amused, Octavius claps his hands. Door* R. *opens quietly, and Edward Moulton-Barrett enters.*)
ELIZ. (*Breathlessly, as she sees him.*) Papa —— (*An awkward silence. Henrietta stops dead in middle of room. Barrett stands just inside room with a perfectly expressionless face. Elizabeth continues.*) Good evening, Papa. (*Without reply Barrett crosses, stands with his back to fireplace* L. *A pause, no one moves.*)
BARRETT. (*Before fireplace* L. *in a cold measured voice looking straight before him.*) I am most displeased! (*A pause.*) It is quite in order that you should visit your sister of an evening, and have a few quiet words with her. But I think I have pointed out, not once, but several times, that in her very precarious state of health it is most inadvisable for more than three of you to be in her room at the same time! My wishes in this matter have been disregarded —as usual! (*A pause.*) You all know very well that your sister must avoid any kind of excitement. Absolute quiet is essential, especially before she retires for the night. And yet I find you romping around her like a lot of disorderly children. I am gravely displeased. (*Henrietta gives a nervous little giggle.*) I am not aware that I have said anything amusing, Henrietta.
HENR. I—I beg your pardon, Papa.
BARRETT. May I ask what you were doing, as I came into the room?
HENR. I was showing Ba how to polk.
BARRETT. To—polk?
HENR. How to dance the polka.
BARRETT. I see. (*Long pause.*)
OCT. (*Nervously, starting toward Elizabeth.*) Well, B-Ba, I think I'll say g-good night, and ——
BARRETT. I should be grateful if you would kindly allow me to finish speaking.
OCT. (*Stepping back.*) Sorry, sir, I thought you'd d-done.
BARRETT. (*With frigid anger.*) Are you being insolent, sir?
OCT. N-no, indeed, sir. I assure you ——

BARRETT. Very well.

ELIZ. As I am really the cause of your displeasure, Papa, I ought to tell you that I like nothing better than a little noise occasionally. It's delightful having all the family here together, and can't possibly do me any harm.

BARRETT. Perhaps you will forgive my saying, Elizabeth, that you are not the best judge of what is good or bad for you. And that brings me to what I came here to speak to you about. Dr. Chambers told me just now that you had persuaded him to allow you to discontinue drinking porter with your meals.

ELIZ. It needed very little persuasion, Papa. I said I detested porter, and he agreed at once that I should take milk instead.

BARRETT. I questioned him closely as to the comparative strength-giving values of porter and milk, and he was forced to admit that porter came decidedly first.

ELIZ. That may be, Papa. But when you dislike a thing to loathing, I don't see how it *can* do you any good.

BARRETT. I said just now that you are not the best judge of what is good or bad for you, my child. May I add that self-discipline is always beneficial, and self-indulgence invariably harmful! Believe me, Elizabeth, I have nothing but your welfare at heart when I warn you that if you decide to discontinue drinking porter, you will incur my grave displeasure.

ELIZ. But when Dr. Chambers himself ——

BARRETT. I have told you what Dr. Chambers said!

ELIZ. Yes, but ——

BARRETT. Did you drink your porter at dinner?

ELIZ. No.

BARRETT. Then I hope you will do so before you go to bed.

ELIZ. No, Papa, that's asking too much. I can't drink the horrible stuff in cold blood.

BARRETT. Very well. Of course I have no means of coercing you. You are no longer a child. But I intend to give your better nature every chance of asserting itself. A tankard of porter will be left at your bedside, and I hope that tomorrow you will be able to tell me that you have obeyed your Father.

ELIZ. I am sorry, Papa—but I shan't drink it.

BARRETT. (*Taking a step forward.*) Henrietta—go down to the kitchen and fetch a tankard of porter!

HENR. (*Her voice trembling with anger and agitation.*) No, I won't!
BARRETT. I beg your pardon?
HENR. (*Desperately.*) It's—it's sheer cruelty. You know how Ba hates the stuff. The Doctor has let her off. You're just torturing her because you—like torturing!
BARRETT. I have told you to fetch a tankard of porter from the kitchen!
HENR. I won't do it!
BARRETT. Must I ask you a third time! (*Suddenly shouting.*) Obey me this instant!
ELIZ. (*Sharply.*) Papa! Go and fetch it, Henrietta! Go at once! I can't stand this!
HENR. No. I ——
ELIZ. Please—please ——? (*After a moment's indecision, Henrietta turns, exits, leaving door open.*)
BARRETT. (*After a pause, quietly.*) You had all better say good night to your sister. (*Goes up stage* L., *crosses to* R. C. *as the boys all start a general movement.*)
ARABEL. (*Goes to below sofa, whispers.*) Good night, dearest. (*She kisses Elizabeth on the cheek. Elizabeth receives it impassively.*)
ELIZ. (*In a toneless voice.*) Good night. (*Arabel crosses and exits. Each of the boys in turn goes to Elizabeth and kisses her cheek.*)
HENRY. (*Coming down* L. *below sofa.*) Good night, Ba.
ELIZ. Good night. (*Henry crosses, exits.*)
OCT. (*Coming down above sofa.*) Good night, Ba.
ELIZ. Good night. (*Octavius crosses, exits* R.)
CHARLES. (*Coming above sofa.*) Good night, Ba.
ELIZ. Good night. (*Charles crosses, exits.*)
SEPT. (*Coming around* L. *below sofa.*) Good night, Ba.
ELIZ. Good night. (*Septimus crosses, exits.*)
GEORGE. (*Coming above sofa.*) Good night, Ba.
ELIZ. Good night. (*George crosses, exits* R.)
ALFRED. (*Coming above sofa.*) Good night, Ba.
ELIZ. Good night. (*Alfred crosses, exits. Barrett upstage* C. *and Elizabeth on sofa, stare before them with expressionless faces. Pause, then Henrietta enters* R. *with a tankard of porter. She stands at threshold glaring at Barrett and breathing quickly.*)

Give it to me, please. (*Henrietta starts toward her, when Barrett suddenly but quietly intervenes.*)
BARRETT. (*Crossing down* R.) No. (*Takes tankard, speaking to Henrietta.*) You may go. (*Henrietta makes move to approach Elizabeth, but Barrett stops her.*) You may go!
ELIZ. Good night. (*Henrietta, after a defiant look at Barrett, exits, closing door.*)
BARRETT. (*Places porter on mantel* L., *then goes to sofa and stands looking down at Elizabeth. She looks up at him with wide fearful eyes. He turns and goes around* L. *end to her below sofa, speaks in gentle voice.*) Elizabeth.
ELIZ. (*In a whisper.*) Yes?
BARRETT. Why do you look at me like that, child? (*Placing hand on her head and bending it slightly back.*) Are you frightened?
ELIZ. (*As before.*) No.
BARRETT. (*Moving to* C. *of sofa, behind it.*) You're trembling, why?
ELIZ. I—I don't know.
BARRETT. You're not frightened of me? (*Elizabeth is about to speak, he continues quickly.*) No—no—you mustn't say it. I couldn't bear to think that. You're everything in the world to me—you know that. Without you I should be quite alone—you know that, too. And you—if you love me, you can't be afraid of me. For love casts out fear. You love me, my darling? You love your Father?
ELIZ. (*In a whisper.*) Yes.
BARRETT. (*Eagerly.*) And you'll prove your love by doing as I wish?
ELIZ. I don't understand. I was going to drink ——
BARRETT. (*Quickly.*) Yes, out of fear, not love. Listen, dear. I told you just now that if you disobeyed me, you would incur my displeasure. I take that back. I shall never in any way reproach you. You shall never know by word, or deed, or hint of mine, how much you have grieved and wounded your Father by refusing to do the little thing he asked.
ELIZ. Oh, please, please, don't say any more. It's all so petty and sordid. Please give me the tankard.
BARRETT. You are acting of your own free will ——?
ELIZ. Oh, Papa, let us get this over and forget it. I can't forgive

myself for having made the whole house miserable over a tankard of porter. (*Crossing above sofa, he gets tankard from mantel* L., *gives it to her. She drinks it straight off. He places tankard back on mantel and returns to above top end of sofa, looking down at her yearningly.*)
BARRETT. You're not feeling worse tonight, my darling?
ELIZ. (*Listlessly.*) No, Papa.
BARRETT. Just tired?
ELIZ. Yes—just tired.
BARRETT. I'd better leave you now. Shall I say a little prayer with you before I go?
ELIZ. Please, Papa. (*He kneels beside sofa, clasps hands, lifts face, shuts his eyes. Elizabeth clasps her hands but keeps her eyes open.*)
BARRETT. (*Kneeling at foot of sofa.*) Almighty and merciful God, hear me, I beseech Thee, and grant my humble prayer. In Thy inscrutable wisdom, Thou hast seen good to lay on thy daughter Elizabeth grievous and heavy affliction. For years she hath languished in sickness, and for years, unless in Thy mercy Thou take her to Thyself, she may languish on. Give her to realize the blessed word that Thou chastisest those whom Thou lovest. Give her to bear her sufferings in patience. Take her into Thy loving care tonight. Purge her mind of all selfish, and bitter, and unkind thoughts, guard her and comfort her. These things I beseech Thee, for the sake of Thy dear son, Jesus Christ. Amen.
ELIZ. Amen.
BARRETT. (*Rising, goes behind sofa, kisses her forehead.*) Good night, my child.
ELIZ. (*Receiving kiss impassively, not returning it.*) Good night, Papa. (*He crosses between chair and sofa, to* R., *and exits, meeting Wilson in hall out* R., *as she is about to enter with Flush in her arms. Elizabeth lies motionless a moment or two staring straight before her, as Wilson enters with Flush, closing door after her.*)
WILSON. (*Crossing to sofa.*) Are you ready for your bed now, Miss Ba?
ELIZ. Oh, Wilson, I'm so tired, tired, tired of it all. Will it never end?
WILSON. End, Miss?
ELIZ. This long, long, gray death in life.
WILSON. Oh, Miss Ba, you shouldn't say such things.
ELIZ. No, I suppose I shouldn't. Did Flush enjoy his run?

WILSON. (*Giving Flush to her from above sofa.*) Oh, yes, Miss.
ELIZ. Is it a fine night, Wilson?
WILSON. Yes, Miss, and quite warm, and there's such a lovely moon.
ELIZ. (*Eagerly.*) A moon! Oh, do you think I can see it from here?
WILSON. I don't know, I'm sure.
ELIZ. Draw back the curtain and raise the blind. (*Wilson does so, at window up* R. C., *and the moonlight, tempered by the lamplight, streams on Elizabeth's face.*)
WILSON. (*Goes behind sofa to look, moves sofa slightly.*) There you are, Miss. The moon's right above the chimneys, you can see it lovely.
ELIZ. (*Dreamily.*) Yes—yes. Please put out the lamp and leave me for a little ——
WILSON. Very well, Miss Ba.
ELIZ. (*Finishing.*) I don't want to go to bed quite yet. (*Wilson extinguishes lamp behind couch* L. C., *crosses, takes lamp from table desk* R. C., *exits. Elizabeth is left bathed in strong moonlight. She stares for a while fixedly at the moon. Then her quickened breathing becomes audible, and one sees her whole body shaken with sobs. She turns her head to her* L., *facing down. The only sound is her strangled weeping as curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

ACT I

SCENE 2: *Same as in* SCENE 1, *with the following few changes. The curtains are all open and blinds up. The unlighted lamps are back in their places on stage. The lamp and stand back of sofa* L. C. *have been moved back to* L. *Sofa now points somewhat up, and the castors have been removed from it. Table from up* L. C. *is down back of sofa, with bowl of tulips on it. Tea table from up* R. *is down before sofa, on it a dinner tray with an untouched sweet. The leather portfolio is on sofa, coverlet from which has been removed to* U. R. *desk chair. The*

yellow shawl has been taken away, and pewter tankard removed from mantel L.

TIME: *Mid-afternoon.*

AT RISE: *The sunshine pours into the room. There are discovered Flush, in his basket up* L., *and Elizabeth on sofa* L. C., *a cover over feet, reading with intense absorption, now and again running her fingers through her ringlets, or tossing them back from her face.*

ELIZ. (*To herself with puzzled emphasis as she reads.*)
"With flowers in completeness
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time"——
(*A knock at door* R. *Elizabeth, absorbed, takes no notice. She repeats, clutching her forehead.*)
"All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles——"
(*Knock is repeated. Continuing.*)
"Of wine——"
(*Calling.*) Come in. (*Wilson enters, crossing to sofa.*) Oh, yes, Wilson, I'm quite ready for lunch.
WILSON. (*Stolidly.*) You've 'ad your lunch, Miss Ba.
ELIZ. Oh, yes, of course. And I enjoyed it very much.
WILSON. You only picked at the fish, Miss Ba. An' I took away the best part of that nice chop, an' I see you 'aven't touched the pudding—cornflour blammonge, too, with raspberry jam.
ELIZ. (*Wonderingly regarding tray.*) Oh—anyhow it's too late now. (*Wilson takes table and tray from below sofa. Crosses up* R. *and leaves table, puts tray on desk* R. C., *then crosses above sofa to dressing table up* L. C., *measures out some medicine into a glass. Elizabeth, absorbed in her reading, does not notice.*)
WILSON. (*Holding glass of medicine to her.*) Your physic, Miss Ba.
ELIZ. (*Taking glass, eyes still fixed on book.*) Thank you. (*Glass in her hand, she continues reading.*)
WILSON. (*Noticing sunlight, crosses up to window.*) I think p'raps I'd better pull down the blind a bit. Too much sun isn't good for you, Miss. (*Half draws blind, returns to above sofa.*)

ELIZ. (*Still holding untouched glass, eyes still on book.*) Thank you.

WILSON. But you 'aven't drunk it yet, Miss.

ELIZ. Oh —— (*Swallows medicine, and with a little grimace hands glass to Wilson, who takes it across to tray, which she takes up and carries out to hall off* R.) Please open the door, Wilson. I am expecting visitors this afternoon and I want the room to be quite fresh for them. How I wish we could open the window, Wilson!

WILSON. (*Shocked, returning and crossing toward Elizabeth.*) Open the window, Miss Ba!

ELIZ. (*Sighing.*) Yes—I know it's strictly forbidden. Well, open the door *wide.*

WILSON. I'd best cover you well up, first of all. (*Fetches shawl, covers her.*) Visitors, Miss Ba?

ELIZ. Yes. My cousin, Miss Bella Hedley. I haven't seen her since she was a child—such a lovely slip of a child. And now she's just become engaged.

WILSON. (*Crossing* R. *to open door wider.*) Indeed, Miss! And is she bringing her young gentleman with her?

ELIZ. Yes. And Mr. Robert Browning is calling later.

WILSON. (*Crossing* C. *to foot of sofa.*) Indeed, Miss? The gentleman who's always sending you such lovely boukeys?

ELIZ. Yes. (*Starts reading again.*)

WILSON. Sure you don't feel a draught, Miss Ba?

ELIZ. Quite, thanks.

WILSON. (*Arranging scarf on her shoulders.*) Hadn't you better keep your neck covered? These spring days the air is that treacherous!

ELIZ. (*To herself, with despairing emphasis.*) No—it's quite beyond me—I give it up.

WILSON. (*Standing above sofa.*) Beg pardon?

ELIZ. (*Intensely.*) Wilson?

WILSON. Yes, Miss?

ELIZ. Have you noticed anything—*strange* in me, today?

WILSON. Strange, Miss?

ELIZ. Yes, strange. I mean, dull-witted—thick-headed—stupid—idiotic?

WILSON. Lor'—no. P'raps a bit absent-minded like, but that isn't anything for *you* to worry about, Miss.

ELIZ. Then you don't think I'm going mad?
WILSON. Mercy on us—mad?
ELIZ. Very well. But now listen carefully, and tell me what you make of this. (*She reads.*)
"And after, for pastime,
If June be refulgent
With flowers in completeness
All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time—
And choose one indulgent
To redness and sweetness;
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
June used my June-lighting the strong insect-ridder
To stop the fresh film work—why June will consider."
(*Questioningly.*) Well?
WILSON. (*Enthusiastically.*) I call that just lovely, Miss Ba.
ELIZ. But do you know what it means?
WILSON. Oh, no, Miss.
ELIZ. Does it convey *anything* to your mind?
WILSON. Oh, no, Miss.
ELIZ. (*With a sigh of relief.*) Thank Heaven for that.
WILSON. But then po'try never does, Miss. Leastways, not real po'try, like what you make.
ELIZ. But I didn't write that. It's by Mr. Browning.
WILSON. (*Up* L. *to Flush's basket.*) He must be a clever gentleman.
ELIZ. (*With a laugh.*) Oh, yes, he's all that.
WILSON. (*Taking Flush from basket.*) And now, Miss Ba, if you're all nice and comfortable, I'll take Flush out for his airing.
ELIZ. (*Holding out her arms for the dog, which Wilson gives to her.*) Well, Flush dear, are you going to behave nicely today? I shall ask Wilson for a full report, when she gets home. (*To Wilson.*) Where are you taking him?
WILSON. Well, Miss, being so fine, I thought of a little walk in the Park.
ELIZ. Oh, Flush, I'd give almost anything to be going with you instead of Wilson. (*Gives Flush back to Wilson. Octavius is seen walking through hall out* R. *She continues as she sees him at door.*) Occy, dear. (*Octavius enters* R., *crossing to her.*) What on earth

are you doing at home at this time of day? (*Wilson exits, carrying Flush.*)

OCT. Papa's b-bright idea. Suggested I should take a half-holiday, and help you f-feed and entertain the l-love-birds.

ELIZ. (*Laughing.*) But why? Henrietta and Arabel are socially quite competent. So am I.

OCT. (*Sits* R. *end of sofa.*) But you labor under the d-disadvantage of being all of the same sex. Papa seems to think that at least one male B-Barrett ought to show up.

ELIZ. I see. Occy, there's one thing you don't know, and I want you to be diplomatic. Captain Surtees Cook is calling at the same time as Bella and Mr. Bevan. He's coming to see Henrietta.

OCT. Is he, by Jove! And won't the gallant feller rejoice when he finds himself chaperoned f-four times over!

ELIZ. I've arranged for Arabel to bring Bella and Mr. Bevan up here to see me. You must come with them.

OCT. And why?

ELIZ. So that Henrietta may have Captain Cook to herself for a little while.

OCT. But does it occur to you, my dear Ba, that we may be doing Henrietta an uncommonly b-bad turn by encouraging this b-budding romance?

ELIZ. Yes—but I think we ought to chance that. (*Octavius looks at her questioningly.*) Occy, when you six boys said good night to me yesterday, a queer thought came into my mind—you weren't alive at all—just automata.

OCT. By Jove!

ELIZ. Like automata you get up at half-past seven every morning. Like automata you eat your breakfast. Like automata you go to your work. Like automata you return home. You dine like automata. You go to bed like automata.

OCT. But, I say ——

ELIZ. You all seem to me to have cut out of life everything that makes life worth living—excitement—adventure—change—conflict—frivolity—love ——

OCT. We haven't cut 'em out, my dear. That operation was performed by dear P-Papa.

ELIZ. I know, but ——

OCT. Oh, I admit we're a pretty spineless lot. But what would you? We're none of *us* particularly gifted, and we're all of us

wholly dependent on Papa, and must obey or be broken. You're not c-counselling sedition?
ELIZ. No—but not resignation. Keep your souls alive. What frightens me is that you may become content with a life which isn't life at all. You're going that way, all of you, except Henrietta.
OCT. And what does she get by t-trying to be herself? More kicks than ha'pence.
ELIZ. Yes—but being kicked keeps one alive. So don't let us do anything just for the sake of peace and quiet, to hinder her little romance.
OCT. All very f-fine, my dear Ba—but what about you?
ELIZ. Me?
OCT. Yes, you. I don't notice that you make much of a struggle against it. Where did that p-porter finally g-get to, last night?
ELIZ. (*With a dreary little laugh.*) I am quite out of it. You have your lives before you. My life is over. (*Henrietta enters.*)
OCT. Rubbish!
HENR. (*As she enters, crossing to* R. *below desk.*) Why, Occy, what are you doing here?
OCT. (*Rising, steps to meet her, to* R. C. *below chair.*) Papa's notion. He somehow got wind that Surtees Cook was p-prowling round this afternoon, and sent me home to read the f-feller off.
ELIZ. Occy!
HENR. (*In breathless consternation.*) How did he hear? He couldn't have heard—unless you—or Arabel ——
ELIZ. No, dear. Occy—you idiot!
OCT. (*Sits chair* C. *To Henrietta.*) Sorry—my little joke, you know!
HENR. (*Hotly.*) I hate you!
OCT. Quite right, too. I repeat, I'm sorry. You may s-slap me if you like.
HENR. (*Half-mollified.*) I've a good mind to.
OCT. (*Pulls her onto his lap. Elizabeth resumes reading.*) No, my che-ild, it's like this. His Majesty sent me home to represent His Majesty, at the reception. I don't intend to leave Bella's side, not even when she and her beloved come up here to em-embrace Ba. Meanwhile, you'll amuse Cook j-just as you're amusing me now. (*Kisses her.*) In fact, we may take this as a little rehearsal.
HENR. (*Jumping up.*) Occy! How can you be so vulgar? What's that? (*Runs to window.*) Oh, Ba, they've arrived. And in state.

The Bevan family—barouche—powdered footmen and all. (*Octavius joins her.*) Look at Bella. What a gown—what a bonnet! Lovely! Oh, and Mr. Bevan's whiskers! (*Gestures round her chin.*) Aren't you green with envy, Occy?

OCT. Positively verdant.

HENR. (*Pushing Octavius to door.*) Go and help Arabel receive them. Off with you—quick. I'll wait here till Captain Cook arrives. (*She pushes him off; he exits, leaving door open. Henrietta goes back up to window, looks eagerly into street.*) What's the time?

ELIZ. (*Smiling.*) Five minutes past three.

HENR. *Past* three?

ELIZ. Past three!

HENR. I don't understand—he said three —— Ba—today is Thursday, isn't it?

ELIZ. Yes, dear.

HENR. (*With relief, turning to window.*) Oh—I wish he were able to come in his uniform. That would take the curl out of Mr. Bevan's whiskers. (*Elizabeth laughs.*) Oh, there he comes. (*She runs out of room, leaving door open.*)

ELIZ. Please shut the door. (*Henrietta has gone. Elizabeth smiles, shrugs, takes up book and starts reading again. After a moment, Octavius re-enters.*)

OCT. Are you ready to receive them? (*Turns, starts to go. Voices of Bella, Arabel and Bevan are heard off* R.)

ELIZ. Yes, quite. (*Calling, as he turns to go.*) Occy! What are they like?

OCT. (*Turning around.*) Oh, she's a dream of l-loveliness—and he isn't. (*He exits. Short pause, as voices grow nearer, then Bella Hedley flutters in, followed by Arabel, then Henry Bevan, lastly Octavius.*)

BELLA. (*Ecstatically, crossing above chair to Elizabeth above sofa.*) Cousin Elizabeth!

ELIZ. (*Extending hand.*) Bella, dear. (*Arabel follows Bella, stops* L. *of desk. Bevan crosses to* R. *of foot of sofa. Octavius crosses to* L. *of desk upstage.*)

BELLA. Ba. (*Embraces Elizabeth.*) Dearest Ba. After all these years! But, oh, my poor, poor Ba, how sadly you've changed! So pale! so fragile, so ethereal.

ELIZ. And you, dear Bella, are even lovelier than you promised to be as a child.

BELLA. Flatterer. (*Kisses Elizabeth's hand, and still holding it, rises.*) You hear that, Ha'wy? This is my dear, dear Ha'wy. Mr. Bevan, Miss Elizabeth Ba'wett.
BEVAN. (*Bowing.*) Delighted, Miss Barrett, charmed.
BELLA. (*Stretching her free hand to him, he takes it.*) No, no, Ha'wy, you must take her hand. (*Tenderly to Elizabeth.*) Such a lovely hand. So fwail. So spiwitual.
BEVAN. (*Takes Elizabeth's hand, bows over it.*) And the hand that penned so much that is noble and eloquent. I am honored, Miss Barrett.
ELIZ. Thank you. And may I congratulate you—both of you? I hope you will be very happy.
BEVAN. Thank you, Miss Barrett. I am indeed a fortunate man.
BELLA. Dear Ha'wy! Dear Ba!
ELIZ. But won't you sit down. (*Bella sits on couch, Arabel on chair below desk. Bevan sits chair* C., *Octavius stands* U. C.)
BELLA. I adore your poems, Ba—especially when dear Ha'wy weads them. He wead me "Lady Gewaldine's Courtship" the day after we became engaged. He weads so beautifully. And he too adores your poems, which ought to please you as he is so dweadfully cwitical.
BEVAN. (*Stroking his beard.*) Oh, come, come, my pet.
BELLA. Oh, but, Ha'wy, you are. He doesn't quite approve of even Mr. Alfred Tennyson's poems.
ELIZ. Really, Mr. Bevan?
BEVAN. I have nothing against them as poetry. No, indeed. Mr. Tennyson always writes like a gentleman. What grieves me, Miss Barrett, is that his attitude towards sacred matters is all too often an attitude tinged with doubt.
ARABEL. How sad ——
BEVAN. Sad indeed, Miss Arabel, and, I grieve to say, a very prevalent attitude among the younger men of today. (*Bella exchanges glances with Octavius.*) Of course I am not alluding to Mr. Tennyson when I say this. His work is always reverent, even when expressing doubt. Now, your poems, my dear Miss Barrett, show no touch anywhere of these modern tendencies. There's not a line in one of them that I would disapprove of even dear Bella reading.
ELIZ. That's very satisfactory.
BELLA. Dear Ha'wy is so fwightfully earnest.

BEVAN. Oh, come, come, my pet.
OCT. (*Coming down* L. *of chair.*) I say, Mr. Bevan, you've not yet met my Father, have you?
BEVAN. No, that pleasure is yet to come.
OCT. I think you and he would g-get on famously together.
BEVAN. Indeed!
BELLA. Oh, yes. For dear Uncle Edward is fwightfully earnest as well. Mama has often told me so.
ELIZ. But now tell me, dear, when is the wedding to be? Or am I being indiscreet?
BEVAN. Not at all, dear Miss Barrett, not at all, we ——
BELLA. (*To Elizabeth.*) Oh, that weminds me. Where's dear Henwietta? The wedding? Early in August. (*Looks about.*) Where's Henwietta?
OCT. At the moment she's downstairs entertaining a friend.
BELLA. Oh, I wanted to ask her—a fwiend? Not that tall gentleman we passed in the hall?
ELIZ. Yes, Captain Surtees Cook.
BELLA. Oh, in the Army? How thwilling! I thought his ca'wiage was military. So he's a fwiend of dear Henwietta?
ELIZ. Yes. You wanted to ask Henrietta something?
BELLA. Oh, yes. Oh, Ba, I do so want her to be one of my bridesmaids. (*Henrietta enters, is visibly distrait. Bella rises, crosses* C. *to meet her, and kisses her, taking both her hands. Bevan rises, steps back.*) Henwietta darling, I was just saying—oh, you must be one of my bwidesmaids, you simply must.
HENR. Bridesmaids? Oh, yes—at your wedding. I should love to, Bella. It's sweet of you to ask me. And of course I will, if Papa—but I'm sure he won't mind.
BELLA. Mind? Uncle Edward? Why should he mind? Isn't she funny, Ba? You're only asked to be a bwidesmaid, darling—not a bwide.
HENR. Yes, I know, but of—it's so hard to explain.
BEVAN. (*To Elizabeth.*) Perhaps Mr. Barrett looks on bridesmaids as frivolous irrelevancies at so solemn a sacrament as marriage?
HENR. No, no, Mr. Bevan. It's not that. It's—it's simply that nothing—nothing at all in this house, must happen without Papa's sanction. (*To Bevan.*) You know he once owned slaves in Jamaica,

and as slavery has been abolished there, he carries it on in England.
BEVAN. Oh, come, now!
HENR. I'm quite serious—we're all his slaves here.
ARABEL. Henrietta! (*Bevan and Bella look embarrassed.*)
HENR. Well, aren't we? We haven't a soul of our own, not one of us. I tell you, Bella, it's more than likely that he'll refuse to let me be your bridesmaid, for no rhyme or reason—except that he's out of temper.
OCT. (*Breaking in.*) I say, what about t-tea?
ARABEL. (*Rising quickly.*) Oh, yes, yes.
HENR. (*Going to* R. U. *window.*) Tea is quite ready. I'm sorry—I —I forgot to tell you.
OCT. (*Crossing behind and* R. *of desk to door.*) Good Heavens, let's hurry, or Captain Cook will have swallowed it all.
HENR. He's gone. (*Standing up at window, her face half averted.*)
BELLA. (*Crossing to Elizabeth below couch. Bevan steps down.*) A wivederci, dearest Ba. (*Kisses her.*) It's been so lovely seeing you. May I come again, soon? And next time I shall want you all to myself—without Ha'wy, I mean.
ELIZ. Come whenever you like, dear.
BEVAN. But why must I be excluded?
BELLA. (*To Bevan.*) Because I've heaps and heaps to tell dear Ba about a certain big, big man, who might easily gwow conceited if he heard me.
BEVAN. Oh, come, come, my pet. (*Bella crosses to Arabel, and they start out. Bevan from below sofa bows over Elizabeth's hand.*) Good-day, dear Miss Barrett.
ELIZ. Good-bye. It was nice of you to come and see me.
BEVAN. Not at all. I have long been looking forward to the honor of meeting you. Good-day.
BELLA. (*Kisses her hand to Elizabeth.*) Au revoir, darling.
ELIZ. Auf wiedersehen. (*Bella and Arabel exit, Bevan follows.*)
BEVAN. (*Turns and bows at door* R.) Good-day.
ELIZ. Good-bye. (*Bevan exits. Octavius follows across* R., *turns and bows at door in imitation of Bevan, then exits, closing door. Elizabeth smiles, glances at Henrietta, who stands with averted face at window up* R. C., *then takes her book, starts reading.*)
HENR. (*After pause, vehemently.*) Well, why don't you say something?

ELIZ. (*Coldly.*) What do you want me to say?
HENR. Nothing. Ba, don't scold me. (*Crosses down to her upstage of couch and kneels.*) I know I deserve it—I have been dreadful. But I couldn't help it. I'm so miserable.
ELIZ. (*Quickly.*) Miserable, dear?
HENR. Yes—and so—so—wildly happy. Surtees has just asked me to marry him.
ELIZ. Oh, Henrietta!
HENR. And of course I accepted him—and said that I couldn't. And I had to tell him that we must never see each other again. When he calls here tomorrow we shall have to ——
ELIZ. You're not talking sense, child. What really has happened?
HENR. I don't know—except that we both love each other terribly. Oh, Ba, what *are* we to do? Surtees has only just enough money to keep himself decently. And, I haven't a penny of my own. If only I had your four hundred a year, I might defy Papa and leave the house, and marry Surtees tomorrow.
ELIZ. And what earthly good is that money to me? I'd give it to you, and how gladly ——
HENR. I know you would, darling. But that's utterly impossible. Think what your life would be like when Papa knew that you had made it possible for me to marry. (*With sudden urgency.*) But dear, is there anything, anything at all to be said for Papa's attitude towards marriage? Can it possibly be wrong to want a man's love desperately, and to long for babies of my own?
ELIZ. No. But who am I to answer a question like that? Love and babies are so utterly remote from my life ——
HENR. Yes, I know, dear. You're a woman apart. But it's natural to an ordinary girl like me, and what's natural can't be wrong.
ELIZ. No—and yet the holiest men and women renounced these things ——
HENR. I daresay. But I'm not holy—and come to that, neither is Papa—not by any means. (*A knock at door. Henrietta rises.*)
ELIZ. Come in. (*Wilson enters, comes to* R. *below desk.*)
WILSON. Mr. Robert Browning has called, Miss.
ELIZ. (*Breathlessly.*) Mr. Browning ——
WILSON. Yes, Miss.
HENR. Then I'd better be off. (*Starts to cross* R.)
ELIZ. N-no, stay here. I can't see him. I—I don't feel up to it —I ——

HENR. But, Ba, what on earth is the matter? You told me yesterday ——
ELIZ. I know—I know. But I really don't feel that I can see him now. (*To Wilson.*) Please tell Mr. Browning I am very sorry, but I am not well enough to receive him.
HENR. But that's not true. You can't send him away like that. (*To Wilson.*) Where is Mr. Browning?
WILSON. I showed him into the library, Miss.
ELIZ. But I'd much—much rather not see him ——
HENR. Oh, fudge! You're not a silly schoolgirl. I'll bring him up myself. (*Starts out, above Wilson.*) Mr. Kenyon says he's wonderfully romantic-looking, and quite the dandy. (*Runs out.*)
ELIZ. Is my hair tidy?
WILSON. Yes, Miss Ba.
ELIZ. Oh, please arrange the couvre-pied. (*Wilson does so, above sofa.*) Thank you. And, Wilson—no—thank you, that will do.
WILSON. Yes, Miss. (*She goes out, closing door. A pause while Elizabeth, in strained excitement, awaits the coming of Browning. Then Henrietta enters.*)
HENR. (*As she enters, inside door.*) Mr. Robert Browning. (*Browning enters, pausing a few steps inside room. Henrietta exits again.*)
BROWNING. (*As he steps inside room.*) Miss Barrett?
ELIZ. (*Stretching out her hand.*) How do you do, Mr. Browning?
BROWNING. (*Crossing to sofa, takes her hand in his.*) Dear Miss Barrett—at last! (*Raising her hand to his lips.*) At last.
ELIZ. (*Still all nerves, and overcome by the ardor and unconventionality of his manner.*) I—I've had to put off the pleasure of meeting you much longer than I wished.
BROWNING. (*Still holding her hand.*) Would you ever have received me if I hadn't been so tiresomely insistent?
ELIZ. As you know from my letters, I've not been at all well during this winter, and I —— (*Realizing her hand is still in his.*) But won't you take off your cape?
BROWNING. (*Takes off cape, leaves it on chair below desk* R., *leaving hat and cane on desk.*) Thank you.
ELIZ. I—I hope you won't find this room very close, Mr. Browning?
BROWNING. No—no ——

ELIZ. My Doctor obliges me to live in what I am afraid must be to you a hot-house temperature.

BROWNING. (*Facing up to windows, looking around.*) Wonderful. You may think, Miss Barrett, that this is the first time I've been here. You're quite wrong, you know.

ELIZ. But I ——

BROWNING. I have seen this room more times than I can remember. It's as familiar to me as my own little study at home. Before I came in, I knew how your books were arranged, just how that tendril of ivy slants across the window-panes—and that bust of Homer is quite an old friend, and has looked down on me before.

ELIZ. But, really ——

BROWNING. But I could never make out who the other fellow is, on the top of the wardrobe, and ——

ELIZ. (*Smiling, now at her ease.*) Oh, come, Mr. Browning. I know that dear Mr. Kenyon is never tired of talking about his friends, but I can't believe that he described my poor little room to you in detail.

BROWNING. (*Moving* C. *chair to* D. R. *corner of sofa, and sitting.*) I dragged all the details I possibly could out of him, and my imagination supplied the rest. Directly I had read your brave and lovely verses, I was greedy for anything and everything I could get about you.

ELIZ. (*Smiling.*) You frighten me, Mr. Browning.

BROWNING. Why?

ELIZ. Well, you know how Mr. Kenyon's enthusiasm runs away with his tongue. He and I are the dearest of friends. What he told you about me I quite blush to imagine.

BROWNING. You mean, Miss Barrett, about you—you yourself?

ELIZ. I feel it would be hopeless for me to try to live up to his description.

BROWNING. He never told me anything about you personally that had the slightest interest for me.

ELIZ. (*Puzzled.*) Oh?

BROWNING. Everything he could give me about your surroundings and the circumstances of your life I snatched at with avidity, but all he said about *you* was quite beside the point, because I knew it already—and better than Mr. Kenyon, old friend of yours though he is.

ELIZ. But, Mr. Browning—do my poor writings give me so hopelessly away?
BROWNING. Hopelessly—utterly—entirely—to me. I can't speak for the rest of the world.
ELIZ. You frighten me again.
BROWNING. No?
ELIZ. But you do. For I'm afraid it would be quite useless my ever trying to play-act with you.
BROWNING. Quite useless.
ELIZ. (*Smiling.*) I shall always have to be just myself.
BROWNING. Always.
ELIZ. And you, too, Mr. Browning.
BROWNING. Always—just myself. But really you know, Miss Barrett, I shan't be able to take much credit for that. Being myself comes to me as easily as breathing. It's play-acting I can't manage —and the hot water I've got into in consequence. If life's to run smoothly we should all be mummers. Well, I can't mum.
ELIZ. I can well believe that, now I've met you. But isn't it extraordinary? When you are *writing*, you never do anything else but play-act.
BROWNING. I know ——
ELIZ. You have never been yourself in any one of your poems. It's always somebody else speaking through you.
BROWNING. Yes, and shall I tell you why? I am a very modest man. (*Quickly.*) I am, really.
ELIZ. I didn't question it, Mr. Browning.
BROWNING. So modest I fully realize that if I wrote about myself—my hopes and fears, hates and loves, and the rest of it—my poems would be unutterably dull.
ELIZ. Well, Mr. Browning, since we are pledged to nothing but the truth, I shan't contradict that until I know you better.
BROWNING. (*Laughing.*) Bravo!
ELIZ. Oh, but those poems of yours, with their glad and great-hearted acceptance of life, you can't imagine what they mean to me. Here am I, shut in by four walls—the view of Wimpole Street my only glimpse of the world. And they troop into the room and round my sofa, those wonderful people of yours, out of every age and country, and all so tingling with life. No, you'll never begin to realize how much I owe you.
BROWNING. (*With emotion.*) You—you really mean that?

ELIZ. Why, why, Mr. Browning ——
BROWNING. But, of course you do, or you wouldn't say it. And you'll believe me when I tell you that what you have just said makes up to me—oh, a thousand times over for all the cold-shouldering I've had from the public.
ELIZ. Oh, it infuriates me. Why can we never know an eagle for an eagle until it has spread its wings and flown away from us for good?
BROWNING. (*Lightly.*) Mind you, Miss Barrett, I've an uneasy feeling that my style is largely to blame for my unpopularity.
ELIZ. (*A little too eagerly.*) Oh, surely not.
BROWNING. Didn't we agree not to play-act with each other?
ELIZ. (*With a laugh.*) Touché! Well, perhaps there are passages in your work a little invol—well, a little too—too profound for the general reader.
BROWNING. Oh, no, it's not what I say, but how I say it. And yet to me, it's all as simple as the rule of three. And to you?
ELIZ. Not quite always. Sometimes there *are* passages —— (*She picks up a book.*) I have marked one or two in your "Sordello" which rather puzzled me ——
BROWNING. Oh, "Sordello."
ELIZ. (*Opening book and handing it to him.*) Here, for instance.
BROWNING. (*Taking book.*) Somebody once called it a horror of great darkness. I've done my best to forget it. However —— (*He reads passage to himself, smiling. Then the smile fades, he passes his hand over his brow, reads it again. She watches him, covertly smiling. He mutters.*) Extraordinary—but a passage torn from its context —— (*Rises, goes to window for more light on the subject, reads passage a third time. Elizabeth has difficulty in suppressing her amusement. He turns to her with an expression of humorous chagrin.*)
ELIZ. Well?
BROWNING. Well, Miss Barrett, when that passage was written only God and Robert Browning understood it. Now, only God understands it. (*She laughs, he joins heartily, crossing* L. *to sofa.*) What do you say, shall we lighten this great darkness by pitching it on the fire?
ELIZ. (*Indignantly.*) No, indeed. We shall do nothing of the kind. Please give me back the book. (*He does so.*) Such passages are only spots on the sun. I love "Sordello."

BROWNING. (*Eagerly.*) You would. Of course you would. And shall I tell you why? Because—because it's such a colossal failure.
ELIZ. If by a failure you mean an attempt—yes, you're right. That's just why "Sordello" appeals to my very heart. For I too am always making colossal attempts—and always failing.
BROWNING. Isn't one such failure worth a hundred small successes?
ELIZ. Oh, a thousand and more.
BROWNING. (*Ardently.*) You think so, too? But of course I knew that. Miss Barrett, you smiled when I told you that Mr. Kenyon had no need to describe you, because I knew you through and through already. And what you have just said about success and failure proves to me finally how right I was. All Kenyon did was to fill in the background. I had painted the portrait with the true soul of you, ardent and lovely, looking out of it.
ELIZ. Ardent and lovely. And you think you know me! (*A bitter smile.*) Oh, Mr. Browning, too often impatient and rebellious!
BROWNING. (*Coming round* R. *of sofa.*) Well, what of it? I've no love for perfect patience under affliction. My portrait is the portrait of a woman, not of a saint. Who has more right to be impatient and rebellious than you? (*Moves chair* R. *to below sofa.*)
ELIZ. Did Mr. Kenyon paint my background with a very gloomy brush?
BROWNING. Old Rembrandt would have envied him.
ELIZ. (*Smilingly. Browning sits* R. D. *of her.*) Poor dear Mr. Kenyon. I assure you, my afflictions worry him a great deal more than they worry me. I suppose he told you that I am a dying woman?
BROWNING. We are all of us—dying.
ELIZ. And that my family life was one of unrelieved gloom?
BROWNING. Yes, he hinted at something of the sort.
ELIZ. He really shouldn't say such things. Frankly, Mr. Browning, do you find me such a pitiable object?
BROWNING. I find you, as I expected to find you, full of courage and gaiety. And yet, in spite of what you say, I'm not at all sure that Kenyon's colors were too sombre.
ELIZ. But ——
BROWNING. No—no—listen to me. Those colors are not yet dry. They must be scraped off. The whole background must be repainted. And if only you'll allow it, I must have a hand in that splendid task.

ELIZ. But, Mr. Browning ——
BROWNING. No, listen, I'll dip my brush into the sunrise, and the sunset, and the rainbow. You say my verses have helped you —they're nothing. It's I—I who am going to help you now. We've come together at last, and I don't intend to let you go again.
ELIZ. But ——
BROWNING. No, listen to me. Give me your hands. (*Bends forward, takes them.*) I've more life in me than is good for one man. It seethes and races in me. Up to now I've spent a little of that surplus energy in creating imaginary men and women. But I've still so much that I've no use for, but to give. Mayn't I give it to you? Don't you feel new life tingling and prickling up your fingers and arms right into your heart and brain?
ELIZ. (*Rather frightened.*) Oh, please—Mr. Browning, please let go my hands! (*He opens his hands, but she still leaves hers in his open palms for a moment, then withdraws them, and clasping her cheeks, looks at him with wide disturbing eyes.*)
BROWNING. (*Softly.*) Well?
ELIZ. (*A little shakily, with forced lightness.*) Well—you are really rather an overwhelming person, and in sober truth, I'm ——
BROWNING. No,—don't tell me again that you are afraid of me. You're not. It's life you're afraid of—and that shouldn't be.
ELIZ. Life?
BROWNING. Yes.
ELIZ. Well, when life becomes a series of electric shocks ——
BROWNING. (*Smiling.*) Was it as bad as all that?
ELIZ. Indeed, yes. Do you affect other people in the same way?
BROWNING. They've often told me so.
ELIZ. (*Lightly.*) No wonder I hesitated about meeting you, much as I wanted to. You'll laugh at me, Mr. Browning, but when my maid told me you had arrived, I was so panic-stricken that I all but sent down word that I was too unwell to receive you.
BROWNING. I think I must have been about as nervous as you, at that moment.
ELIZ. You, Mr. Browning?
BROWNING. Yes, yes, and I'm anything but a nervous man as a rule. But that moment was the climax of my life—up to now. Miss Barrett, do you remember the first letter I wrote to you?
ELIZ. Yes, indeed, it was a wonderful letter.
BROWNING. You may have thought I dashed it off in a fit of

white-hot enthusiasm over your poems. I didn't. I weighed every word of every sentence—and of one sentence in particular—this sentence: "I love your books with all my heart, and I love you, too." You remember?

ELIZ. Yes—and I thought it charmingly impulsive of you.

BROWNING. (*Almost with irritation.*) But I tell you there was nothing impulsive about it. That sentence was as deeply felt and as anxiously thought-over as any sentence I've ever written.

ELIZ. I hope I may have many readers like you! It's wonderful to think I may have good friends all the world over, whom I have never seen nor heard of.

BROWNING. I am not speaking of friendship—but of love. (*Elizabeth is about to make a smiling rejoinder.*) No, it's quite useless your trying to put aside the word with a smile and a jest. I said love—and I mean love.

ELIZ. But, really, Mr. Browning, I must ask you ——

BROWNING. I'm neither mad nor morbidly impressionable—I'm as sane and level-headed as any man alive. Yet all these months since first I read your poems, I've been haunted by you—and today you are the center of my life.

ELIZ. (*Very gravely.*) If I were to take you seriously, Mr. Browning, it would, of course, mean the quick finish of a friendship which promises to be very pleasant to both of us.

BROWNING. Why?

ELIZ. You know very well that love, in the sense you apparently use the word, has no place, and can have no place, in my life.

BROWNING. Why?

ELIZ. For many reasons—but let this suffice. As I told you before, I am a dying woman.

BROWNING. (*Passionately.*) I refuse to believe it. For if that were so, God would be callous and I know that He's compassionate—and life would be dark and evil, and I know that it's good. You must never say such a thing again. I forbid you to.

ELIZ. Forbid, Mr. Browning?

BROWNING. Yes—forbid. If you forbid me to speak of you as I feel, and I accept your orders, as I must—isn't it only fair that I should be allowed a little forbidding, as well?

ELIZ. Yes, but ——

BROWNING. (*With sudden gaiety.*) Dear Miss Barrett, what a splendid beginning to our friendship. We have known each other

a bare half hour, and we've talked intimately of art, and life, and death, and love. And we've ordered each other about, and we've almost quarrelled. Could anything be happier and more promising? Well, with your permission, I'm going now. (*Rising, crosses and puts chair back* C.) Mr. Kenyon impressed upon me to make my first visit as short as possible, as strangers tire you. Not that I'm a stranger—still I can see that you are tired. When may I call again? (*Puts on cape, crosses to above sofa.*)

ELIZ. (*A little dazed.*) I don't quite know ——

BROWNING. Will next Wednesday suit you?

ELIZ. Yes, I—I think so. But perhaps it would be better ——

BROWNING. Next Wednesday, then.

ELIZ. But ——

BROWNING. At half-past three, again?

ELIZ. Yes—but I ——

BROWNING. (*Bowing over her hand.*) Au revoir, then. (*Kisses hand.*)

ELIZ. Good-bye.

BROWNING. (*Crossing* R., *and turning.*) Au revoir.

ELIZ. Au revoir.

BROWNING. Thank you. (*Turns and exits, closing door. The moment door closes, Elizabeth sits up and clasps her face with both hands. Then slips off sofa, and unsteadily gets to her feet. With the help of* C. *chair she manages to cross the room to window up* R. C. *Grasping curtains to support herself, she stands looking down into the street after the departing Browning. Her face is as alive with excitement and joy as though she were a young girl, as Curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *The scene is the same, with the following changes. The sofa points down, and everything on it has been made untidy, with books, papers, etc., strewn about. The medicine, glass, spoon, and pitcher have been struck from dressing-table up* L. C. *Flowers placed on desk and on table up* L., *and all tables have been put back in their original positions.*

TIME: *The time is mid-afternoon.*

AT RISE: *The room is lighted by the bright light of day. There is discovered the dog, Flush, lying on sofa. Elizabeth, walking with firm tread* U. C. *to window, and back downstage again. Dr. Chambers, who stands by fireplace* L. *and Dr. Ford-Waterlow, who sits* L. C. *by sofa. Both Doctors are intently watching Elizabeth as she walks.*

WATERLOW. (*Standing below and* R. *of chair* R. *as Elizabeth comes down.*) Once again, if you please. (*Elizabeth walks downstage and back up* C. *again with greater assurance than before. He meets her as she comes back up* C.) My dear Miss Barrett, I congratulate you. Now sit down. (*Indicates sofa* L. C. *She sits. To Chambers.*) When exactly was it you last called me in for consultation, Chambers? (*Taking her wrist from* R. *end of sofa to take pulse.*)

CHAMBERS. (*Standing below sofa* L., *back to fire.*) Three months ago—almost to a day.

WATERLOW. Yes, yes, of course—and your patient was in a very low condition at that time. Well, you've done wonders, Chambers.

CHAMBERS. Oh, mine was just the ordinary spade-work. Honesty compels me to give most of the credit to another.

WATERLOW. (*Dropping her wrist.*) Eh?

CHAMBERS. The real healer is no one but Miss Barrett herself.

ELIZ. But, Doctor ——

CHAMBERS. I mean it, my dear—I mean it. Three months ago

you seemed more than a little inclined to let life and the world slip through your pretty fingers. Then slowly the change began. Oh, believe me, I was watching you like a lynx. Life and the world became more and more worth grasping. The wish to live is better than a dozen physicians, as I think even my distinguished friend will admit.

WATERLOW. (*Walks down* R. *of sofa, turns.*) The wish to live—h'm—yes. And you are able to get about and take the air occasionally nowadays?

ELIZ. Oh, yes, Doctor. I have visited some of my friends and been for several delightful drives around the Park. The only bother is getting up and downstairs. I'm inclined to lose my head going down, and I'm not yet able to undertake the upward journey.

WATERLOW. (*Walks* R. *to* C.) Quite so—quite so. (*Moves* C. *chair to sit* R. *of sofa.*) Well, now, about the future, Miss Barrett. I fully agree with Dr. Chambers that another winter in London must, if possible, be avoided. If you continue picking up strength, as you are doing, I see no reason against your traveling South by October, say.

ELIZ. (*With barely controlled eagerness.*) Travelling? South?

WATERLOW. To the Riviera—or better still, to Italy.

ELIZ. Italy! Oh, Doctor—do you really mean it?

WATERLOW. Why not? You could travel there by easy stages. I have been given to understand that you have set your heart on Italy, and there are no—er—practical difficulties in the way of your going there?

ELIZ. If by practical, you mean financial—none at all. I have my own little income, and ——

WATERLOW. Quite so—quite so.

CHAMBERS. I've taken the liberty to tell Dr. Ford-Waterlow of the only real difficulty in the way of your wintering abroad, and he is quite prepared to deal with—him.

WATERLOW. Quite—and drastically!

ELIZ. Oh, I am sure that won't be necessary. Papa may not raise any kind of objection. It depends on how he is feeling at the time, and ——

WATERLOW. Fiddlesticks, my dear young lady! Mr. Barrett's feelings are neither here nor there. All that matters is his daughter's health and happiness, as I intend to make clear to him. Quite clear!

ELIZ. Oh, you mustn't think that Papa isn't kindness and generosity itself. But gentlemen have their moods. Italy! Oh, it's hard to take in even the bare possibility of going there. My promised land, Doctor, which I never thought to see otherwise than in dreams.

WATERLOW. (*Rising, drawing chair back to* C.) Well, well, let us hope realization won't bring disillusion along with it. A grossly overrated country, to my mind. Nothing but heaps of rubbish, dust, flies, stenches, and beggars. Good-bye, my dear Miss Barrett. (*Takes her hand as she starts to rise.*) No, please don't get up. I'm delighted with your improvements. Delighted. And now for a little talk with your Father. Good-bye.

ELIZ. Good-bye, Doctor. (*Waterlow crosses* R. *and exits.*)

CHAMBERS. (*Who has moved* R. *to above sofa, patting her shoulder and taking her hand.*) Good-bye, my dear Miss Elizabeth.

ELIZ. Good-bye. (*Chambers crosses to* R., *exits after Waterlow, closing door after him. Elizabeth clasps both her cheeks and whispers.*) Italy—Italy—Italy! (*She picks up Flush and talks to him.*) And you're coming with us, too, Flushy. We'll see Rome together —Florence—Venice—Vesuvius —— (*Arabel enters, closing door, crossing* C. *Elizabeth puts Flush down, jumps to her feet and embraces Arabel below* R. *end of sofa.*) Arabel! It's all but settled, my dear. I'm to go to Italy. He says that I shall be quite fit to travel by October. Rome! Florence! Venice! Vesuvius!! Raphael! Dante! Sordello! Oh, I don't know what I'm saying—I'm quite off my head with excitement.

ARABEL. How wonderful for you! I'm so glad. And you think Papa will consent?

ELIZ. But of course he will! The Doctors are putting it before him as strongly as they can. Oh, surely he'll never have the heart to refuse when he realizes all this Italian trip means to me.

ARABEL. (*Without conviction.*) No, dear, no ——

ELIZ. Have you seen him this afternoon?

ARABEL. Yes.

ELIZ. (*Quickly, taking Arabel's hands.*) What was he like?

ARABEL. (*Eagerly.*) Oh, quite sunny! He called me "Fuss," and he never does that when he's in one of his moods. And afterwards, when Bella came in, he was really merry.

ELIZ. (*Turns and walks* L. *below sofa.*) Thank Heaven for that.

ARABEL. Which reminds me, dear—Bella has brought the gown

Henrietta is to wear as bridesmaid. They want you to see it. They're trying it on now.

ELIZ. Oh, I should love to. (*Turns, crosses below sofa to* L., *pulls bell-rope.*) I need badly some distraction to help me over the suspense of waiting for Papa's decision.

ARABEL. (*Standing still.*) Somehow I felt, Ba, that it wasn't altogether wise of you to keep this Italian plan secret from Papa, and then spring it suddenly on him. (*A knock at door. Arabel walks up* C.)

ELIZ. Come in. (*Wilson enters, comes to below desk* R. C.) Wilson, please tell Miss Hedley and Miss Henrietta I shall be delighted to see them now.

WILSON. Yes, Miss.

ELIZ. (*Going to pick up Flush from sofa.*) Oh, and, Wilson, take Flush with you. He gets so excited when there are several people in the room. (*Hands Flush to Wilson, who crosses and exits, closing door. Elizabeth sits on* L. C. *of sofa, Arabel turns to her.*) It was Dr. Chambers himself who advised me to say nothing to Papa until both Doctors were satisfied that I was absolutely fit to travel. I quite agreed with him at the time—but now —— Oh, Arabel— (*Arabel walks toward her, she takes Arabel's hands.*) I'm not so sure now! I'm so afraid Papa may think —— (*The voices of Bella and Henrietta are heard off* R.) Don't say anything about this to them. (*Arabel nods, sits sofa beside her.*)

BELLA. (*Off* R.) May we come in?

ELIZ. (*Rising. Arabel also rises, moves* C.) Come in, dear. (*Bella flutters in, followed by Henrietta in bridesmaid's gown.*) Bella, dear! (*Elizabeth goes to meet Bella. Arabel moves* R. *to behind* C. *chair. Bella stops* C. L. *downstage. Henrietta comes to below desk a little* L.)

BELLA. (*Embracing Elizabeth.*) Darling, darling! Oh, but you weally shouldn't get up to weceive little me.

ARABEL. (*Contemplating Henrietta.*) How perfectly lovely!

ELIZ. (*Steps towards Henrietta.*) Delicious.

BELLA. (*As Henrietta turns about to show off gown.*) Yes, isn't it? Isn't she? I should say. Dear Henrietta will be quite the pwettiest of my bwidesmaids. Indeed I'm afwaid she'll dwaw all eyes fwom the little bwide. At any wate all the gentlemen's. (*Going to Elizabeth and taking both her hands.*) But, darling Ba, you weally mustn't stand about like this! (*Leads her to sofa.*)

ELIZ. But I'm as well able to stand as anyone nowadays.
BELLA. (*As Elizabeth submits to being led to sofa, where she sits* R. *end.*) No, no. One has only to see your dear face, so twanspawent and spiwitual, to know how near you are to Heaven. You always have a look in your eyes, darling, as though you alweady saw the angels. (*Arabel sits on chair* L. *of desk.*)
HENR. She's looking at me, Bella, and I'm no angel.
BELLA. (*Crosses* R. *to* C.) No, I'm afwaid you're not—but you're vewy, vewy beautiful. And, fancy, Ba, if I hadn't spoken to Uncle Edward myself, I should never have had her for my bwidesmaid.
ELIZ. Yes, my dear, you certainly have a way with you.
HENR. Spoken to Papa. I like that. Why, you sat on his knee and stroked his whiskers.
ARABEL. Henrietta, dear! (*Elizabeth laughs.*)
BELLA. (*Standing* R. *of sofa.*) And why not? Isn't he my Uncle? Besides that, I think he's most fwightfully thwilling. I adore that stern and gloomy type of gentleman. It's so exciting to coax and manage them. And so easy—if you know how! And I weally think I do. What I can't understand is his extwaordinawy attitude towards love and mawwiage, and all that. And didn't he mawwy himself—and what's more, have eleven children? (*Uncomfortable silence, as sisters bow their heads.*) Oh, have I said anything vewy dweadful?
ARABEL. No, dear, but perhaps not quite nice. When God sends us children, it's not for us to inquire how and why.
BELLA. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to be iwevewent. But I do find dear Uncle Edward's attitude extwaordinawy—and so useless. For in spite of it, and wight under his nose, and all unknown to him, his whole house is litewally seething with womance.
ARABEL. Bella!
HENR. (*Sharply.*) What on earth do you mean?
BELLA. (*Crosses* R. *to Henrietta, below Arabel.*) *You* ought to know, darling.
HENR. I?
BELLA. (*Enthusiastically.*) I think Captain Surtees Cook is quite fwightfully thwilling. The way he looks at you, dear—and looks, and looks, and looks. If he ever looked at me like that my knees would twemble, and I'd get the loveliest shivers down my back.
ARABEL. (*Rising.*) Really, Bella! (*She moves and sits on chair* C.)
BELLA. (*Walks behind Arabel up* C.) And then there's George.

You may not believe it, but I'm absolutely certain he has a thwilling understanding with your little cousin Lizzie. As for poor Occy —I don't mind telling you in confidence that my dear, dear Hawy is fwightfully jealous of him.

ARABEL. Mr. Bevan jealous of Occy! But why?

BELLA. Why indeed? Aren't gentlemen silly? (*Henrietta walks straight back upstage and turns facing Bella.*)

ELIZ. (*Laughing.*) What an extraordinary girl you are, Bella.

BELLA. (*Moving* L. *to sofa.*) Oh, I'm a fwightfully observant little thing. F'w instance, though you hardly ever mention his name, I know that Mr. Robert Browning comes here to see you at least once every week. But at other times he sends you flowers, and he often bwings little cakes for dear Flush. Flush! Oh, wouldn't it be fwightfully intewesting if only dear Flush could speak!

ARABEL. Good gracious—why?

BELLA. You see, dear Flush is the only witness to all that goes on at Ba's weekly tete-a-tete with the handsomest poet in England. He—Flush I mean—ought to know a wonderful lot about poetwy by this time! For when two poets are gathered together, they talk about whymes and wythms all the time? (*To Elizabeth.*) Or don't they? I'm fwightfully ignowant.

ELIZ. Oh, no, my dear. On the contrary, you're "fwightfully" knowing.

BELLA. Me?

HENR. (*To above and* R. *of Arabel.*) I hope to goodness you won't chatter any of this outrageous nonsense in front of Papa.

BELLA. But of course I won't bweathe a word of it to Uncle Edward. I'm all on the side of womance, and the path of twue love, and all that.

ARABEL. Bella—I regret to say it, but I think you are one of the few girls I know who would have benefited entirely under Papa's system of upbringing. (*Elizabeth and Henrietta laugh.*)

BELLA. Ooh—what a thwilling thought! He was always fwightfully stwict, wasn't he? Did he whip you when you were naughty? How fwightfully exciting it would be to be whipped by Uncle Edward. (*Barrett opens door, and enters. The sisters are on the alert.*)

ELIZ. (*As Barrett enters, closing door after him.*) Papa!

BELLA. Oh, Uncle Edward—Uncle dear, if I had been your little girl instead of Papa's, would you have been tewibly severe with

me? You wouldn't, would you? Or would you? (*She crosses to face him* R. C.)

BARRETT. Would—wouldn't—wouldn't—would? Are you trying to pose me with some silly riddle?

BELLA. No, no, no! Sit down. (*She pushes him into chair below desk.*) It's like this—but why that gloomy fwown, Uncle Edward? (*Passes fingers lightly over his forehead.*) There—there, all gone. (*Sits on his knee.*) Arabel says it would have done me all the good in the world to have been brought up by you. She thinks I'm a spoilt, fwivolous little baggage, and —— (*Henrietta moves to* R. *window.*)

ARABEL. (*Rising.*) Bella—I never said anything of the sort!

BELLA. I know you didn't, but you *do*. (*To others.*) And *you* do—and *you* do. But *you* don't, Uncle, do you?

ARABEL. Really, Bella ——

BARRETT. (*Speaking to Bella, but at the others.*) If my children were as bright and affectionate and open as you are, I should be a much happier man. (*Arabel sits again chair* C. *Henrietta moves* R. *behind desk.*)

BELLA. Oh, you mustn't say such things, or they'll hate me.

BARRETT. (*The two are quite withdrawn from and oblivious to the others.*) And you're a distractingly lovely little creature.

BELLA. Anything wrong in that?

BARRETT. (*Thickly.*) I didn't say so.

BELLA. Then why do you look at me so fiercely—do you want to eat me up?

BARRETT. What's that scent you have on?

BELLA. Scent? Me? (*Coyly.*) Don't you like it?

BARRETT. I abominate scent as a rule—but yours is different.

BELLA. Nice?

BARRETT. It's very delicate and subtle—still, I should prefer you not to use it.

BELLA. Why?

BARRETT. Never mind.

BELLA. (*Triumphantly.*) I never use scent. I haven't a dwop on me! Oh, Uncle, you're a darling! You've called me bwight and open and affectionate, distwactingly lovely, and fwagwent, all within a few minutes. You may kiss me. (*He kisses her roughly on the mouth twice. Suddenly he pushes her abruptly from his knees, and rises. She looks a trifle scared.*)

BARRETT. (*Brusquely.*) There, there, child, run away now, I want to speak to Ba. (*To others.*) You can go, too. (*Crosses up to window and stands looking out, his back to the room. Henrietta moves first, going behind* R. *desk, and exits. Arabel crosses above and goes out. Bella exchanges looks with Elizabeth.*)
BELLA. (*In a rather injured voice.*) Good-bye, Uncle.
BARRETT. (*Without turning.*) Good-bye.
BELLA. Good-bye, Ba. (*With a toss of the head she exits, closing door.*)
ELIZ. (*As she goes.*) Good-bye, Bella. (*Pause as Elizabeth looks with nervous expectancy at Barrett: who still stands at window, his back to the room.*)
BARRETT. (*Without turning.*) When is the wedding?
ELIZ. The wedding? Oh, Bella. On the twenty-seventh.
BARRETT. (*Turning, speaking half to himself.*) Good. We are not likely to see much of her 'til then—and afterwards—well, she'll be living in the country most of the year.
ELIZ. But I thought you were so fond of her, Papa?
BARRETT. (*Sharply.*) Fond of her? Why not? Isn't she my niece?—She's a disturbing influence in the house. To see your brothers following her about with their eyes—Faugh! The room is still full of her! I shall be glad when she's gone. But I don't want to talk about Bella. Your Doctors have just left me.
ELIZ. (*Expectantly.*) Yes, Papa ——?
BARRETT. (*With forced heartiness, coming down to above and* L. *of chair* C.) Their report is excellent. Astonishing. I'm more than gratified—I'm delighted. (*Not looking at her.*) Of course, my poor child, it's unlikely that you will ever be a normal woman. Even Chambers—optimistic fool that he is—was forced to admit that. (*Looking at her.*) By the way, who is this Dr. Ford-Waterlow?
ELIZ. I've been told he is one of the cleverest physicians in London.
BARRETT. Really? Well, he needs some amazing qualities to counterbalance his execrable manners. But even this medical phenomenon was unable to account for the sudden improvement in your health. He put it down to Chambers' ministration—which is, of course, arrant nonsense.
ELIZ. Perhaps the wonderful weather we've been having has most to do with it. I always thrive in warmth and sunshine.
BARRETT. Rubbish! Last summer was sweltering, and you have never been worse than then. No—to my mind there is only One

whom we have to thank—though this Doctor what's-his-name was pleased to sneer when I mentioned HIM.
ELIZ. HIM?
BARRETT. I mean Almighty God. It amazes me, Elizabeth, that you on whom this miracle of recovery has been worked should ascribe it to mere earthly agencies. Haven't I knelt here night after night and implored our all-loving Father to have compassion on His child? It amazes me. It grieves me unspeakably. This is all I have to say for the present. (*He turns, crosses above chair* C. *to door* R.)
ELIZ. Papa. (*Barrett stops just below* L. *of* R. *desk.*)
BARRETT. (*Turning downstage.*) Well?
ELIZ. Didn't Dr. Ford-Waterlow speak to you about—about next winter?
BARRETT. Dr. Ford-Waterlow talked, if I may say so, a great deal of nonsense. (*He turns to go.*)
ELIZ. (*Stops him at door.*) But, Papa ——
BARRETT. (*Jestily, turning upstage.*) What is it?
ELIZ. Didn't he tell you that I should avoid spending next winter in England?
BARRETT. Well?
ELIZ. And that he thinks I shall be fit to travel to Italy in October, if you ——
BARRETT. So! It's out at last. (*Starts to cross* L., *stopping below* C. *chair.*) And how long has this precious plot been hatching, may I ask?
ELIZ. It's now several weeks since Dr. Chambers first mentioned Italy as a real possibility.
BARRETT. And do your brothers and sisters know anything of this delightful project?
ELIZ. I believe I mentioned it to them.
BARRETT. You believe you mentioned it to them! And Mr. Kenyon, and Mr. Horne, and the Hedleys, and that charlatan Browning—all your friends and relations, in short—you've discussed all your plans with a lot of them, I suppose?
ELIZ. Oh, Papa, what does it matter? My only reason ——
BARRETT. Matter? Not in the least! It's nothing at all that I alone should be shut out of my favorite daughter's confidence, treated like a cipher, ignored, insulted ——
ELIZ. Insulted?

BARRETT. Grossly insulted. When that fellow Ford-Waterlow sprung your carefully-prepared mine on me, and I naturally expressed my astonishment and displeasure, he became extremely offensive.

ELIZ. Believe me, Papa, my one reason for not worrying you with this Italian idea before, we ——

BARRETT. The fear that I should nip it in the bud at once. Exactly, I quite understand.

ELIZ. But ——

BARRETT. No. I beg you to spare me explanations and excuses. The whole miserable business is abundantly clear. I am cut to the heart that *you*—the only one of my children whom I trusted implicitly—should be capable of such underhand conduct.

ELIZ. No—no!

BARRETT. If returning health must bring with it such a sad change of character, I shall be driven to wish that you were once more lying helpless on that sofa. There is nothing more to be said. (*He once more turns to door.*)

ELIZ. (*With dignified and restrained passion, rises and walks toward him* R. C. *He stops.*) But there is something more to be said, and I must beg you to listen to me, Papa. How many years have I lain here? (*He slowly turns to face her.*) Five? Six? It's hard to remember, as each year has been like ten. And all that time I've had nothing to look forward to, or hope for, but death.

BARRETT. (*Completing turn, and crossing to her* C.) Death ——?

ELIZ. Yes, death! I was born with a large capacity for happiness—you remember me as a young girl? And when life brought me little happiness and much pain, I was often impatient for the end.

BARRETT. You shock me! Elizabeth! (*Steps towards her.*)

ELIZ. And now this miracle has happened. Day by day I am better able to take and enjoy such good things as everyone has a right to—able to meet my friends—to breathe the open air, and feel the sun, and see grass and flowers growing under the sky. When Dr. Chambers first spoke to me of Italy, I put the idea away from me—it seemed too impossibly wonderful! But as I grew stronger it came over me like a blinding revelation, that Italy wasn't an impossibility at all, that nothing really stood in the way of my going, that I had every right to go.

BARRETT. Right!

ELIZ. Yes! Every right! If only I could get your consent. So I set

about consulting my friends, meeting all obstacles, settling every detail, so as to have a perfectly arranged plan to put before you, after the Doctors had given you their opinion. In my eagerness I may have acted stupidly, mistakenly, tactlessly. But to call my conduct underhand and deceitful is more than unkind—(*Turns downstage* L. *and sits on sofa.*)—it's unjust, it's cruel!

BARRETT. (*More in sorrow than in anger.*) Self! Self! Self! No thought, no consideration for anyone but yourself, or for anything but *your* pleasure.

ELIZ. But, Papa. . . .

BARRETT. Didn't it even once occur to you that all through those long dark, dark months you proposed to enjoy yourself in Italy, your father would be left here utterly alone.

ELIZ. Alone?

BARRETT. Utterly alone. Your brothers and sisters might as well be shadows for all the companionship they afford me. And you—oh, my child, don't think that I haven't noticed that even you, now that you are stronger and no longer dependent on me, are slowly drawing away from your father.

ELIZ. It's not true.

BARRETT. It is true, and in your heart you know it's true.

ELIZ. No!

BARRETT. New life, new interests, new pleasures, new friends—and little by little, I am being pushed into the background. I, who used to be your whole world—I who love you—who love you.

ELIZ. But, Papa ——

BARRETT. No. There is nothing more to be said. (*Crosses up to window, looks out, then turns.*) You want my consent for this Italian jaunt. I shall neither give it nor withhold it. To give it would be against my conscience, as encouraging selfishness and self-indulgence. To withhold it would be a futile gesture. You are at liberty to do as you wish. And if you go, I hope you will sometimes spare a thought for your father. Think of him at night stealing into this room which once held all he loved. Think of him kneeling alone beside the empty sofa, and imploring the Good Shepherd to —— (*A knock at door.*) Eh ——?

ELIZ. (*With a start, her hand to her heart.*) Oh ——

BARRETT. (*Testily, coming downstage* C.) Who's that? Come in. (*Wilson enters.*)

WILSON. (*A little flustered.*) If you please, Miss, Mr. Browning has called.
BARRETT. (*Under his breath.*) That fellow again!
WILSON. I showed Mr. Browning into the drawing-room, Miss, seeing as you were engaged.
ELIZ. Wouldn't you like to meet Mr. Browning, Papa?
BARRETT. Certainly not. I should have thought you knew by this time, I never inflict myself on any of my children's friends. (*To Wilson.*) You may show Mr. Browning up.
WILSON. Very good, sir. (*She exits, closing door.*)
BARRETT. Mr. Browning appears to consider this his second home.
ELIZ. I have not seen him since last Wednesday.
BARRETT. Indeed. (*He turns* R. *below desk, exits, closing door. Elizabeth rises to await Browning's entrance.*)
WILSON. (*Opens door and steps inside, announcing.*) Mr. Browning. (*Browning enters and Wilson exits, closing door.*)
BROWNING. (*Crossing to her, taking her hands.*) Oh, but how splendid. This is the fourth time you've received me standing.
ELIZ. (*Her whole manner has changed, she is now all sparkle and life.*) If ever I receive you from my sofa again, you may put it down to my bad manners and nothing else.
BROWNING. I will, with all my heart, I will. Tell me quickly, I've been dithering with suspense all day? You've seen them? What did they say?
ELIZ. Dr. Ford-Waterlow was quite taken out of his grumpy self with astonished delight at my improvement.
BROWNING. (*Delightedly.*) Say that again.
ELIZ. Must I? The whole sentence?
BROWNING. (*Walking about in enthusiasm. Elizabeth sits* L. *on sofa.*) I should like to see it in letters of fire burning at me from each of these four walls. This is the best moment I've had since I got your note giving me permission to call on you! How many years ago was that?
ELIZ. Three months.
BROWNING. Absurd! We've always been friends. I've known you a lifetime and over! So, he was quite taken out of his grumpy self with astonished delight, was he? (*Sits chair* C.) Splendid! Of course, I never once doubted that you would turn the corner some

day. But even I little dreamt recovery would be so rapid. And Italy? Are both Doctors agreed about your wintering there?
ELIZ. (*With a note of reserve in her voice.*) Yes.
BROWNING. And when do they think you'll be fit for traveling?
ELIZ. The middle of October—unless there's a relapse.
BROWNING. Relapse? There isn't such a word! October! Extraordinary! For you know, October suits my own plans to perfection.
ELIZ. *Your* plans?
BROWNING. Don't you remember my telling you that I had thought of wintering in Italy myself? Well, now I have quite decided. You see, I have practically made up my mind to remodel "Sordello." I should never be able to grapple with the task satisfactorily in England. Impossible to get the Italian atmosphere in a land of drizzle and fog. May I call on you often in Italy? Where do you intend to say? (*Elizabeth laughs.*) Why are you laughing?
ELIZ. In Italy I'm afraid you'll need seven-league boots when you call on me.
BROWNING. What do you mean?
ELIZ. I shall be at Fifty Wimpole Street next winter.
BROWNING. Here?
ELIZ. Yes.
BROWNING. But didn't you tell me that both Doctors were agreed ——?
ELIZ. Doctors may propose, but the decision rests—elsewhere.
BROWNING. Your father?
ELIZ. Yes.
BROWNING. He has vetoed the plan?
ELIZ. No—not exactly. But I am quite sure that he—that it will be impossible for me to go.
BROWNING. But didn't the Doctors make it clear to him that this move of yours may mean all the difference between life and death?
ELIZ. I believe Dr. Ford-Waterlow spoke very forcibly.
BROWNING. Then, in Heaven's name ——!
ELIZ. Oh, it's hard to explain to someone who doesn't know all the circumstances. You see, Papa is very devoted to me, and ——
BROWNING. Devoted?
ELIZ. He's very devoted to me and depends a great deal on my

companionship. He hasn't many points of contact with my brothers and sisters. If I were away for six months, he ——

BROWNING. (*Visibly restraining himself, rising and going toward her.*) Miss Barrett, may I speak plainly?

ELIZ. Oh, do you think you'd better? I know—more or less—how you feel about this. But you see, you don't quite understand all the situation. How should you?

BROWNING. (*Walking up to* C. *window.*) Oh, very well—then I'll say nothing. (*His control suddenly gives way, and his words pour out. Returns down to* U. R. *corner of sofa.*) You tell me I don't understand. You are quite right. I don't. You tell me he is devoted to you. I don't understand a devotion that demands favors as if they were rights, demands duty and respect, and obedience and love, demands all and takes all, and gives nothing in return. I don't understand a devotion that spends itself in petty tyrannies and gross bullying. I don't understand a devotion that grudges you any ray of light and glimpse of happiness, and doesn't even stop at risking your life to gratify its colossal selfishness. Devotion! Give me good sound, honest hatred, rather than devotion like that!

ELIZ. Mr. Browning, I must ask you ——

BROWNING. Forgive me, but I won't be silent any longer. Even before I met you, I was aware that sickness wasn't the only shadow in your life. And all these months, even though you never once breathed a syllable of complaint, I felt that other shadow deepening, and I've stood by and looked on, and said nothing. I might find you tired and sick after hateful scenes I could picture only too vividly—and I must pretend to know nothing, see nothing, feel nothing? Well—I've done with pretense from today on. I refuse any longer to let myself be gagged and handcuffed. (*He goes* L. *and leans on back of sofa.*) It's not just your comfort and happiness which are at stake now. It's your very life—and I forbid you to play with your life! And I have the right to forbid you!

ELIZ. (*Desperately.*) No—no—no—oh, please don't say any more.

BROWNING. (*With compelling ardor.*) The right—and you won't deny it—you're too utterly candid and true. (*Sits on foot of sofa upper side.*) At our first meeting you forbade me to speak of love—there was nothing more than friendship between us. I obeyed you, but I knew very well—we both knew—that I was to be much more than just your friend. Even before I passed that

door, and our eyes first met across the room, I loved you, and I've gone on loving you—and I love you more now than words can tell—and I shall love you to the end and beyond. You know that? You've always known?

ELIZ. (*Brokenly.*) Yes—I've always known. And now, for pity's sake—for pity's sake—leave me. (*Rising.*)

BROWNING. (*With a firm grasp of both her hands, rises, comes around* R. *end of sofa.*) No!

ELIZ. Oh, please—please—let me go! Leave me. We must never see each other again.

BROWNING. (*Maintaining his grasp.*) I shall never let you go—I shall never leave you! (*Draws her into his arms.*) Elizabeth—Elizabeth!

ELIZ. (*Struggling feebly.*) No—no —— Oh, Robert, have mercy on me ——

BROWNING. Elizabeth, my darling —— (*He kisses her, and at the touch of his lips her arms go round his neck.*)

ELIZ. Oh, Robert—I love you—I love you—I love you. (*They kiss again, then she sinks to sofa. He sits* R. *of her, holding her hands.*)

BROWNING. And yet you ask me to take my marching orders, and go out of your life?

ELIZ. Yes, Robert, for what have I to give you? I have so little of all that love asks for. I have no beauty, and no health—and I'm no longer young ——

BROWNING. I love you.

ELIZ. (*With restrained spiritual ecstasy.*) I should have refused to see you after our first meeting. For I loved you then, though I denied it even to myself. Oh, Robert, I think Eve must have felt as I did when her first dawn broke over Paradise—the terror—the wonder—the glory of it. I had no strength to put up any kind of resistance, except the pitiful pretense of mere friendship. I was paralyzed with happiness that I had never dreamt it was possible to feel. That's my only excuse—and God knows I need one—for not having sent you away from me at once.

BROWNING. I love you.

ELIZ. My life had reached its lowest ebb. I was worn out, and hope was dead. Then you came. Robert, do you know what you have done for me? I could have laughed when Dr. Chambers said that I had cured myself by wanting to live. He was right—oh, he

was right. I wanted to live—eagerly, desperately, passionately—and all because life meant you—you —— (*He leans down to kiss her hands.*)—and the sight of your face, and the sound of your voice, and the touch of your hand. Oh, and so much more than that! Because of you the air once more was sweet to breathe, and all the world was good and green again.

BROWNING. (*Rising from kissing her hands.*) And with those words singing in my ears, I'm to turn my back on you and go?

ELIZ. But, Robert, can't you see how impossible ——?

BROWNING. I've never yet turned my back on a friend or an enemy. Am I likely to turn it on you?

ELIZ. But how is it all to end? What have we to look forward to? And how ——?

BROWNING. I love you, and I want you for my wife.

ELIZ. Robert, I can't marry you. How can I, when ——?

BROWNING. Not today or tomorrow. Not this year, perhaps, or next. Perhaps not for years to come ——

ELIZ. I may never be able to marry you.

BROWNING. What then? If you remain to the last beyond my reach I shall die proud and happy in having spent a lifetime fighting to gain the richest prize a man was ever offered.

ELIZ. Oh, Robert, put aside your dream of me and look on me as I am. I love you too well to let you waste your manhood pursuing the pale ghost of a woman.

BROWNING. Do you think I'm a boy to be swept off my feet by an impulse, or a sentimental dreamer blind to reality? There's no man alive who sees things clearer than I do, or has his feet more firmly planted on the earth. And I tell you in all soberness that my need of you is as urgent as your need of me. If your weakness asks my strength for support, my abundant strength cries out for your weakness to complete my life and myself.

ELIZ. (*After pause, turning to face down.*) Robert, have you thought what your position here would be like if you went on seeing me after today?

BROWNING. Yes.

ELIZ. We should have to keep our love secret from everyone lest a whisper of it get to my Father's ears.

BROWNING. I know.

ELIZ. If he had the least suspicion that you were more than a

friend, the door would be slammed in your face, my letters supervised, and my life made unbearable.

BROWNING. I know.

ELIZ. And you, my dear, you're as frank and open as the day. How would you enjoy coming here under false pretenses, and all the subterfuges, and intrigues we'd be forced to use?

BROWNING. (*Smiling.*) I shall detest it—I shall hate it with all my heart and soul—and I thank God for that.

ELIZ. But, Robert ——

BROWNING. For it's splendid and right that I should suffer some discomfort at least for such a reward as you. The immortal garland was never won without dust and heat.

ELIZ. (*Bitterly.*) Immortal! Oh, Robert, fading, if not already faded. (*He is about to protest.*) No, don't speak! Don't speak! (*She rises, crosses to* R. *of sofa up to window, and looks with unseeing eyes down into the street. After a moment she turns back to him.*) Robert, if we were to say good-bye today, we should have nothing but beautiful memories of each other to last to the end of our lives. We should be unhappy, but there are many kinds of unhappiness. (*Walks down and sits* C. *chair.*) Ours would be the unhappiness of those who have put love away from them for the sake of love. There would be no disillusion in it, or bitterness, or remorse.

BROWNING. (*Turning to her, in low tense voice.*) Is it *you* who are speaking?

ELIZ. What do you mean?

BROWNING. I don't know you. I thought yours was the courage that dared the uttermost, careless of defeat. (*Rising, crosses and standing below sofa.*) Here's life—*life*—offering us the best that life can give, and you dare not grasp at it for fear it will turn to dust in your hands. We're to dream away the rest of our lives in tepid sadness, rather than risk utter disaster for utter happiness. I don't know you—I never thought you were a coward.

ELIZ. (*Proudly and indignantly.*) A coward? I? (*With a sudden change of voice.*) Yes, I am a coward, Robert, a coward through and through—but it's not for myself that I'm afraid.

BROWNING. (*Going swiftly to her and taking her in his arms.*) I know that, my darling.

ELIZ. What's another disaster, great or small, to me who have known little but disaster all my life? But you're a fighter, and you

were born for victory and triumph. If disaster came to you through me ——

BROWNING. Yes, a fighter. But I'm sick of fighting alone. I need a comrade-at-arms to fight beside me.

ELIZ. Not one already wounded in the battle?

BROWNING. Wounded, but undefeated, undaunted, unbroken!

ELIZ. Yes, but ——

BROWNING. Then what finer comrade could a man ask for?

ELIZ. But, Robert —— (*He bends down and kisses the protests from her lips.*)

BROWNING. No.

ELIZ. But, Robert ——

BROWNING. No. (*Continues kissing away her protests as Curtain Falls.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 1: *The scene is the same. The room is the same as in Act II, with the following few changes. The sofa is now straight. A book has been placed on mantel. Stool down* L. *has been moved about two feet on stage. The desk has been tidied up. All the flowers have been struck. There are five letters recently received for Elizabeth on desk.*

TIME: *The time is late afternoon.*

AT RISE: *The room is lighted by the light of the late afternoon sun. The stage is empty at rise. When curtain is well up Arabel, in outdoor clothes and carrying Flush, opens door and enters.*

ARABEL. (*Speaking off* R. *as she enters.*) You had really better let Wilson help you up the last few stairs, Ba.

ELIZ. (*Speaking from off* R.) No! No, Wilson! I'm quite all right!

ARABEL. But, my dear —— (*Elizabeth, also in outdoor attire, enters, breathless but triumphant. Wilson follows at her heels.*)

ELIZ. (*Stops below* C. *chair.*) There! All the way up and without one pause or help of any kind! And I feel splendid—just a little out of breath, that's all. (*Sways a little, and Wilson stretches out her hand to support her.*) No, don't touch me—I'm quite all right. (*Walks to sofa* L. C., *takes off bonnet, etc.*) Now, wasn't that a glorious triumph? (*Sits on sofa.*) And you know, Wilson, I got out of the carriage and walked quite two miles in the Park!

WILSON. Lor', Miss! (*Elizabeth gives bonnet, etc., to Wilson: who crosses above desk to put them in wardrobe* R.)

ARABEL. Ba, *dear* ——!

ELIZ. Well, one mile then. Anyhow, that's what I'm going to tell Dr. Chambers.

ARABEL. Really, Ba ——

ELIZ. Oh, my dear, Flush has muddied your gown disgracefully. (*To Flush.*) What a filthy state you're in, Flushy! Wilson, you had better take him and get Jenny to bathe him. He's not been properly washed for ages.

WILSON. (*Taking Flush from Arabel.*) Very good, Miss. (*Wilson exits, carrying Flush.*)
ELIZ. (*Pointing to letters on desk.*) Oh, the post has come. Please give me those letters, dear?
ARABEL. (*Crosses to desk and returns, handing her letters.*) Why, that's Mr. Browning's handwriting! I'm sorry, I couldn't help seeing it. But aren't you expecting him this afternoon?
ELIZ. (*Absently as she rises and crosses up around* L. *end of sofa.*) Yes —— (*Opens letter and reads it with a smile, throws envelope in fire, and stops at upper* L. *corner of sofa.*) Yes, dear, he should be here very soon now. This was just to wish me good night.
ARABEL. To wish you good night?
ELIZ. Yes, you see it was written yesterday evening.
ARABEL. Oh!
ELIZ. (*Running through other letters.*) Mr. Hayden—Miss Martineau—Mr. Horne —— (*With a sharp change in her voice.*) Oh! This is from Papa ——
ARABEL. (*Anxiously.*) From Papa? But he's returning today.
ELIZ. (*Opening letter.*) Perhaps he's been detained.
ARABEL. (*Hopefully.*) Oh, do you think so?
ELIZ. (*Quickly scanning letter, then in consternation.*) Oh! Oh—Arabel ——!
ARABEL. What is it, my dear?
ELIZ. We're leaving.
ARABEL. Leaving?
ELIZ. Yes—leaving this house. Leaving London. Listen —— (*A knock at door, and Henrietta's voice is heard.*)
HENR. (*Off* R.) May I come in, Ba?
ELIZ. (*Coming* R. *around foot of sofa.*) Come in, dear. (*In a buried whisper to Arabel, as she moves* L. *below sofa, facing* L.) Don't speak of this yet. (*Henrietta enters, leaving door open.*)
HENR. (*In great excitement.*) Oh, Ba, you must see him at once! You positively must!
ELIZ. See *him?*
HENR. (*Crossing to below and* L. *of desk.*) He's in his full regimentals! He's just been to St. James to receive—or whatever you call it—his adjutancy or something from Queen Victoria herself. He's wonderful! He's gorgeous! May I bring him up here for you to look at?
ELIZ. But ——

HENR. Papa need never know. (*Elizabeth sits on sofa.*) Oh, Ba, do let me! You've never seen him yet—it's high time you met—and you couldn't see him to better advantage than now. I'm talking of Captain Cook, you know.
ELIZ. Yes, so I gathered. But I can't see him now, dear, as I'm expecting Mr. Browning any minute.
HENR. (*Crestfallen but resigned.*) Oh—then of course it's impossible. But I tell you what, Ba! I'll try to keep him until Mr. Browning goes. I don't think he'll mind. He likes sitting and staring at me. We can both stare at each other. He's well worth staring at today. (*She crosses to door, speaking over her shoulder.*) You can keep your poet here as long as you like. (*Exits, closing door.*)
ELIZ. (*With a short laugh ending in a sigh, staring after her.*) Yes, she had best make the most of her soldier while she can, poor darling. (*She takes up Barrett's letter.*)
ARABEL. (*Moves* L. *to sit* R. *of Elizabeth on sofa.*) Oh, Ba—tell me quickly ——
ELIZ. (*Taking up letter, reading.*) He writes from Dorking: "This is to let you know that we shall be leaving London on Monday the twenty-second of this month. I have taken a furnished house at Bookham, in Surrey, some twenty miles from London, and six miles from Leatherhead, the nearest railway station. Whether we shall eventually make it our permanent home, I have not yet decided. At any rate we shall spend the winter there. You will benefit by the country air, and the complete seclusion of your new surroundings. I have felt for some time now that your present feverishly restless mode of life in London will, if continued, affect you harmfully, both physically and morally. I am writing this letter so that you may inform your brothers and sisters of my decision, and tell them that I decline absolutely to discuss it when I return home tomorrow." That's today.—"The matter is finally settled, and you and they will make such preparations as are needful for the move."
ARABEL. Oh, Ba ——
ELIZ. (*Bitterly.*) That's not quite all. He finishes up with a characteristic touch of humor.
ARABEL. Humor?
ELIZ. Yes. He signs himself, "Your Loving Papa."
ARABEL. The twenty-second. That gives us barely a fortnight longer here.

ELIZ. (*Bitterly, rising, walking to fireplace, where she crumples and throws letter into grate.*) My "feverishly restless mode of life"! A few drives—a few calls on my friends—a few visitors! I wonder he doesn't describe me as a recklessly dissipated woman! He made my going to Italy impossible, and now I am to be cut off from any little pleasures I have begun to find here. (*Drops into chair* R.)

ARABEL. I know, dear, I understand and I'm dreadfully sorry for you. The change won't hit me so hard. My only ties in London are my Mission work and district visiting. But you and Henrietta ——

ELIZ. Well?

ARABEL. (*With sudden earnestness.*) Oh, Ba, don't be angry with me. We all pretend to be ignorant of each other's affairs in this house—except poor Henrietta's. It's safer so. And yet we know—we all know—that you and Mr. Browning ——

ELIZ. Well ——?

ARABEL. Oh, Ba, one has only to look at your face when you're expecting him—and again after he has left you ——

ELIZ. (*Proudly.*) I love him and he loves me. What of it? Haven't I as much right to love and be loved as any other woman?

ARABEL. (*Moves* L. *on sofa.*) Oh, yes, dear—but how is it all to end? As long as Papa's alive none of us will ever be able to marry with his consent—and to marry without it is unthinkable. And in your case it isn't only a question of Papa's consent. Of course it's—it's wonderful how much stronger and better you are. You walked upstairs splendidly just now—but—but ——

ELIZ. But even if I can manage to walk up a few steps, it doesn't mean that I shall ever be fit to marry—is that what you're trying to say?

ARABEL. Oh, Ba, darling, it's because I love you so dearly, and don't want you to suffer, that I'm forcing myself to speak. I know very little about gentlemen—except that they all want to marry the ladies they fall in love with. I don't know Mr. Browning at all—but even great poets want to settle down in time, and have a home—of their own—and a wife—and little ones. It would be so dreadful, if ——

ELIZ. (*Springing up, walks up* L. *of sofa, crosses to window up* C.) Oh, be quiet! Be quiet! Do you suppose I haven't thought

of all that a thousand times already? (*She turns to window and looks out.*)

ARABEL. I am sorry—I—I didn't mean to interfere. (*Rising.*) All I want is to save you any —— (*Notices that Elizabeth, her face transformed with joy, is no longer listening, but is waving her hand to someone in the street.*) Oh ——! (*She crosses and exits quietly, closing door softly, unnoticed by Elizabeth.*)

ELIZ. (*Turning.*) Mr. Browning has just —— (*She realizes the empty room.*) Oh ——! (*Comes down* L., *her eyes fall on crumpled letter in grate, she picks it out, smooths it, and puts it on mantelpiece, her face emptied of joy. Knock at door. She crosses* R. C.) Come in. (*Browning enters. They look at each other in silence for a second.*)

BROWNING. (*Crosses to her, takes her in his arms.*) My love!

ELIZ. Oh, Robert! (*They kiss.*)

BROWNING. (*Holding her at arms' length.*) You look tired, sweetheart. What have you been doing today?

ELIZ. (*With forced lightness.*) I went for a drive and a walk in the Park. And then I ran all the way upstairs without help, and without one stop ——

BROWNING. Oh, but you know! Of course, dearest, it's a splendid feat and I'm proud of you! Come and sit down. (*Points to* C. *chair, she sits, he stands* L. *of her, facing her.*) Now, don't you think you're being a trifle too ambitious?

ELIZ. (*Looking aside.*) I don't think so—I'm feeling wonderfully well.

BROWNING. (*Crossing below to down* R. *of her.*) Look at me. (*She does so.*) What's the matter, Ba?

ELIZ. (*Looking away.*) Nothing ——

BROWNING. Has your Father returned?

ELIZ. No—we expect him today.

BROWNING. (*Leaning over her face from* R. *of chair.*) Those talking eyes of yours give you hopelessly away. Something has gone wrong. What is it? You must tell me.

ELIZ. Read that letter on the mantelpiece, Robert.

BROWNING. (*Crossing to mantelpiece, taking Barrett's letter.*) From your father?

ELIZ. Yes. (*He reads letter to himself, then looks at her, a peculiar smile on his face.*) Well?

BROWNING. (*Still smiling.*) I think, by the look of it, you

crumpled up this letter furiously in your hand—and I'm quite sure you pitched it into the grate.

ELIZ. Yes, I did.

BROWNING. (*Replacing letter on mantel, crossing to her.*) Why?

ELIZ. Oh, Robert, don't you see what this means to us?

BROWNING. Yes—and perhaps a great deal better than you do.

ELIZ. Better than I? Oh, you mustn't deceive yourself. You don't know Papa as I do. He's grown jealous of my life here, my pleasures and my friends, and I'm slowly and surely to be parted from them. Oh, Robert, it will soon be made impossible for me to see you at all.

BROWNING. (*Sits* L. *of her on sofa end.*) This precious letter may mean all that. But it means a great deal more that you haven't yet been able to grasp.

ELIZ. A great deal more ——?

BROWNING. It means that you will be in Italy before the month is out.

ELIZ. (*In a whisper.*) Italy?

BROWNING. Yes, and with me. It means that we must be married at once.

ELIZ. Do you know what you are saying?

BROWNING. Yes, I know what I'm saying—and I repeat it! We must be married at once! My darling, listen to me —— (*He is about to take her hands.*)

ELIZ. No! Don't touch me! What you say is madness. I can't marry you. I can never marry you.

BROWNING. You can and you shall! You'll marry me if I have to carry you out of this house and up to the altar. Do you seriously imagine I'm going to allow myself to be elbowed out of your life, now? And just to satisfy the selfish jealousy of a man whom I no longer believe to be sane? You ought to know me better by this time.

ELIZ. (*Quickly breaking in.*) Oh, Robert, it's not only Papa who stands between us. It's I—it's I ——

BROWNING. We've been into that a hundred times already, and ——

ELIZ. Yes—and now we shall go into it once again, and frankly, and for the last time. Robert, it's no use deceiving ourselves. However much stronger I become, I shall always remain an invalid. You tell me that you want me, sick or well. And it's wonderful of you

to say this. But I—Robert, I'm not generous enough—I'm too proud, if you like. As your wife I should be haunted by the thoughts of all the glories you would have enjoyed but for me—freedom—adventure—and passionate love, I could never really satisfy.

BROWNING. Oh, no, listen ——

ELIZ. Oh, Robert, I should be haunted by the ghosts of your unborn children. When I read that letter my world seemed to fall to pieces. But now I thank God that it came while we're still free, and have the strength to say good-bye.

BROWNING. (*Matter-of-fact.*) On the whole I think this will be our best plan of campaign. The family leave here on the twenty-second. So we have barely a fortnight to get everything done in. You told me last week that Mr. Hedley had invited your sisters to picnic in Richmond Park next Saturday. So the house will be conveniently empty. We'll meet at Mary-le-Bone Church, and be married quietly some time in the morning. I'll see about the license and interview the Vicar at once.

ELIZ. (*Who has been staring at him in bewilderment.*) Robert ——

BROWNING. It would be madness to leave England on the same day. You'll want all the rest and quiet you can get before the journey. So after the ceremony I think you had better come back here and take things easily for a week or two. You'll have six days if we leave here on Saturday week. Now —— (*Takes paper from pocket.*)

ELIZ. Oh, stop! I can't listen to you!

BROWNING. (*Consulting paper.*) For some time now I've kept careful note of the sailings from Southampton in case of just such an emergency as this. The Packet leaves the Royal Pier on Saturdays at nine o'clock. We must catch the five o'clock express at Vauxhall. (*Rises.*) It arrives at Southampton at eight.

ELIZ. (*Laughs wildly, changing to sobs.*) Oh ——! And I always thought that Papa was the most overbearing man in the world ——

BROWNING. (*Kneeling* L. *of her, smiling.*) And yet you've known me for some time now.

ELIZ. But I mustn't give way, Robert, I daren't.

BROWNING. There's one other thing, my darling, of the utmost importance, that we must settle at once. You can't possibly travel

without a maid. You tell me Wilson is entirely devoted to you. Do you think she will be willing to come abroad with us?
ELIZ. (*After a pause, in a low voice.*) Robert—have you ever thought that my strength may break down on the journey?
BROWNING. Yes.
ELIZ. Suppose I were to die on your hands?
BROWNING. (*Quietly.*) Are you afraid, Ba?
ELIZ. (*Proudly, indignantly.*) Afraid? I? You know that I am not afraid. You know that I would sooner die with you beside me, than live a hundred lives without you. But how would *you* feel if I were to die like that? And what would the world say of you?
BROWNING. (*Quietly.*) I should be branded as little less than a murderer, and what I should feel I leave you to imagine ——
ELIZ. And yet you ask me to come with you?
BROWNING. Yes. I am prepared to risk your life and much more than mine, to get you out of this dreadful house into the sunshine, and to have you for my wife.
ELIZ. You love me like that?
BROWNING. I love you like that. (*A long pause. Elizabeth sits motionless staring in front of her.*)
ELIZ. Robert—give me a little time?
BROWNING. Time is short, my dear.
ELIZ. (*Rising, crosses* R. *to down* R. *of desk, faces door.*) Yes, I know. But I must have a little time. I can't decide now. I daren't. (*Browning rises.*) Give me a few hours. Before I sleep tonight, I'll write and tell you my decision. Please, Robert?
BROWNING. (*Following after Elizabeth.*) You promise me that?
ELIZ. I promise.
BROWNING. Very well.
ELIZ. Thank you.
BROWNING. Shall I go now?
ELIZ. Please —— (*He kisses her hand, turns down, crosses, goes straight out, closing door. Elizabeth stands motionless, staring at door. A slight pause, then a knock at door, another pause then a louder knock. Elizabeth starts from her reverie, crosses* L. *to below* C. *of sofa.*) Come in. (*Henrietta enters to below desk* R., *leaving door open.*)
HENR. I saw Mr. Browning going down the stairs. May I bring him in?
ELIZ. Him?

HENR. He's standing on the landing outside. Wake up, Ba! I'm talking of Surtees.
ELIZ. Won't some other time do as well?
HENR. No—no! I told you he was in uniform. You promised to see him, Ba.
ELIZ. (*With a sigh.*) Very well, dear ——
HENR. (*Runs to door, speaking off into passage.*) Come in, Surtees. (*Capt. Surtees Cook, arrayed in regimentals, and with his headgear under his arm, enters.*) Captain Surtees Cook, Ba—my sister, Elizabeth. (*Elizabeth has risen to receive him, he bows stiffly.*)
COOK. (*Stopping below desk* R. C.) Your servant, Miss Barrett.
ELIZ. How do you do. (*She sits* R. *end of sofa.*)
COOK. (*Crossing to her, taking her hand and bowing over it.*) Greatly honored, upon my word I am, Miss Barrett. Understand not everyone received here.
HENR. No, indeed, Surtees! With the exception of the family very few gentlemen have ever been allowed in Ba's room.
COOK. (*Standing below* C. *chair.*) Twice honored in one day, ye know. First by Her Majesty, now by you, Miss Barrett. Can't think what I've done to deserve it.
ELIZ. Oh, I had forgotten! You've just come from the Palace! I have never seen the Queen. What is she like?
COOK. Very little lady, Ma'am, but royal, every inch of her.
HENR. Surtees, you haven't got your sword on!
COOK. Not etiquette, as I told you, to wear it indoors.
HENR. Oh, bother etiquette! I want Ba to see you in full war paint. Where did you leave it?
COOK. In the hall.
HENR. I'll fetch it. (*Runs to door* R.)
COOK. (*Following.*) No, but really—Miss Barrett doesn't want ——
ELIZ. But indeed I do, Captain Cook. I don't think I've ever seen an officer in—full war paint before.
COOK. (*After short pause, steps to her.*) Indeed? Er—Miss Barrett ——
ELIZ. Yes?
COOK. (*Crosses* L. *to down* L. *of sofa.*) Miss Barrett ——
ELIZ. (*Encouragingly.*) Yes, Captain Cook?
COOK. I say, Miss Barrett ——

ELIZ. You want to tell me something about Henrietta?
COOK. (*Eagerly.*) Just so, Miss Barrett, just so. Exactly. You know, Miss Barrett, you know —— (*He is unable to go on.*)
ELIZ. (*Very kindly.*) Yes, Captain Cook, I know. And though I'm powerless to help, believe me you have my heartfelt sympathy. (*She gives him her hand.*)
COOK. (*As he takes her hand.*) Thank you. Thank you. More than I deserve. Thank you, Miss Barrett. Never was such a girl, y'know—Henrietta, I mean. Dunno what I've done to deserve it.
HENR. (*Re-enters with sword, closing door.*) Oh, yes, I thought he'd seize the opportunity to tell you something while I was out of the room. Did he really manage to get it out? (*Stopping below* C. *chair.*)
ELIZ. (*Smiling.*) Well, not quite. Did you, Captain Cook?
COOK. Well—ah—y'know—still, like most ladies—quick in the uptake.
ELIZ. Yes, I understand. My dear, how I wish I could do something for you both!
HENR. Well, you can't—nobody can. (*Sits chair* C. *with sword across her lap.*) Surtees wants to ask Papa—for my hand and all that—quite like the conventional suitor. I can't get it into his poor old head that such things simply are not possible at Fifty Wimpole Street. (*Cook sits on stool down* L.)
ELIZ. (*Earnestly.*) Oh, believe me, Captain Cook, it would be more than useless.
COOK. Quite aware that I'm not much of a match, Miss Barrett. Poor man, y'know. Still, decent family and all that. Should be more than willing, if necessary, to throw soldiering and take to some money-making business, but ——
HENR. And a fine mess you'd make of it, my poor dear!
COOK. Well, I'm not so sure about that. Admit, of course, that soldiering's my special job. Haven't the brain for much else, I'm afraid. Still, you never know what a fellah can't do with a prize like Henrietta to reward his efforts.
HENR. Well, anyhow, you're not to speak to Papa, and I forbid you to give up soldiering. Now that I've seen you in your glory, do you suppose I should ever take you without your uniform? (*Rises and crosses* L. *to him.*) Get up. I want to buckle on your sword. (*She kneels.*)
COOK. Aw, I say —— (*Rises, smiling rather sheepishly.*)

HENR. (*Starting to fasten on sword.*) Ba thinks poets are the flower of manhood—a certain poet, at any rate. I mean to show her that she's mistaken ——

COOK. I say, you've got it wrong. Sword hangs from the left hip, y'know.

HENR. Why?

COOK. Well —— (*Door opens and Barrett enters, taking in scene with a look of amazement, his face hardening. Henrietta rises, stands below head of couch; both girls stare in consternation. Cook stands rigid.*)

ELIZ. Papa—you're—you're home earlier than I expected, Papa.

BARRETT. (*Slowly and deliberately closing door.*) I don't think I have the privilege of this gentleman's acquaintance.

HENR. Captain Cook, may I introduce my Father? Papa—Captain Surtees Cook.

COOK. Your servant, Sir. (*Both men bow stiffly.*)

HENR. Captain Cook is a great friend of George and Occy's.

BARRETT. Indeed? (*To Cook.*) My sons are very rarely at home at this time of day.

COOK. Fact is—just passing the house—thought I'd look in on the off chance, y'know, sir—finding one of them in, and all that ——

BARRETT. I see.

ELIZ. (*Breaking a pause.*) Captain Cook has just come from Buckingham Palace and Henrietta thought I should like to see him in all the splendor of his regimentals.

BARRETT. Indeed. (*Takes out his watch.*)

COOK. Nothing much to look at, of course—but ladies like a bit of color, and—er—m-m —— By Jove, must be getting late.

BARRETT. It's nineteen and a half minutes past five.

COOK. By Jove! High time I were moving —— Good-bye, Miss Barrett.

ELIZ. (*Giving him her hand.*) Good-bye, Captain Cook. (*Barrett crosses to door and holds it open.*)

COOK. Good-bye, Miss Henrietta.

HENR. I'll see you out. (*Cook moves to door, followed by Henrietta.*)

COOK. (*To Barrett.*) Your servant, sir. (*Barrett returns his bow in silence. Cook exits and Henrietta is about to follow. Barrett stays her with a gesture.*)

HENR. I am seeing Captain Cook to the door.

BARRETT. The servant will attend to that. (*He closes door in silence, crosses to fireplace* L., *stands with his back to it, speaking straight before him. Henrietta turns at* R., *crosses up* C. *and stands facing up.*) Your list of gentlemen visitors appears to be lengthening, Elizabeth.

ELIZ. This is the first time I have had the pleasure of meeting Captain Cook.

BARRETT. (*Turning* R.) Indeed. But I infer from what I saw as I came into the room, that Henrietta's acquaintance is of somewhat longer standing? Or am I *mistaken?*

HENR. I have known Captain Cook for some time now.

BARRETT. Ah! And since when has it been your custom to buckle on his accoutrements?

HENR. I have never seen him in uniform before.

BARRETT. And I think it improbable that you will see him in uniform, or in mufti, very frequently in the future.

HENR. (*In a strained voice.*) Why?

BARRETT. (*To Elizabeth.*) You received my letter?

ELIZ. Yes, Papa.

BARRETT. What has just happened fully confirms me in the wisdom of my decision. This house is fast becoming a rendezvous for half London. I have neither time nor inclination to find out whether all the persons visiting here are desirable acquaintances for my children. Fortunately our new home is so far from town that your London friends are not likely to trouble us—at least during the winter.

HENR. (*Blankly.*) Our new home?

BARRETT. (*To Elizabeth.*) You have not told your sisters?

ELIZ. Arabel knows.

HENR. I don't understand. Are we—are we leaving Wimpole Street?

BARRETT. (*Without looking at Henrietta.*) I have taken a house at Bookham, in Surrey, and we move in on the twenty-second.

HENR. Why?

BARRETT. I am not in the habit of accounting for my actions to anyone—least of all to my children.

HENR. But one thing I have a right to ask you, Papa. If Captain Cook is to be forbidden to visit us, is it because you found him here in Ba's room, and saw me fastening on his sword?

BARRETT. I understood you to say that Captain Cook was George's friend, and Occy's?
HENR. Yes, and my friend, too.
BARRETT. Ah!!
HENR. Yes, and since it was I who suggested his seeing Ba, and I who asked him to show me how to buckle on his sword, it's unjust to penalize him for ——
ELIZ. (*Sharply.*) Henrietta ——
BARRETT. (*In a sharp low voice, advancing slowly to* C. *toward Henrietta.*) Come here.
HENR. (*Takes a few steps towards him, and says somewhat breathlessly.*) Yes, Papa?
BARRETT. (*Regards her steadily, and points to floor at his feet.*) Come here. (*She goes right up to him, breathing quickly and fearfully. He keeps his eyes on her face, then in a low ominous voice.*) What is this fellow to you?
HENR. I—I've told you—he's a friend of ours.
BARRETT. What is he to *you*?
HENR. A—a friend.
BARRETT. Is that all?
HENR. (*In a whisper.*) Yes.
BARRETT. (*Suddenly grasping her wrist, his voice like the crack of a whip.*) You liar!
ELIZ. (*Sharply.*) Papa!
HENR. (*Gaspingly.*) Let me go!
BARRETT. (*Tightening his grip.*) What's this man to you? Answer me! (*She tries to free herself and cries out.*) Answer me!
HENR. (*Wildly.*) Oh, Papa—please ——
BARRETT. Answer me!
HENR. (*Trying to resist.*) Oh, don't—don't ——
BARRETT. Answer me!
HENR. (*In a strangled voice.*) He's—he's —— Oh, Papa, I love him.
BARRETT. (*Between his teeth, seizing her other wrist, forcing her to her knees.*) And you—you—you —— (*She gives a cry of pain.*)
ELIZ. (*Rising from sofa, crosses to Barrett, seizing his arm.*) Let her go, Papa! I won't have it! Let her go, at once! (*He flings Henrietta off, and she collapses in a heap on floor, her face buried in her hands, sobbing.*)

BARRETT. (*Turning to Elizabeth.*) And you—you knew of this filthiness?
ELIZ. I've known for some time that Henrietta loved Captain Cook, and I've given her all my sympathy.
BARRETT. You dare to tell me ——
ELIZ. Yes—and I would have given her all my help as well, if I had had it to give.
BARRETT. I'll deal with you later. (*To Henrietta.*) Get up.
HENR. (*Suddenly clasping his knees, in a voice of passionate entreaty.*) Oh, Papa, please listen to me—please! I—I'm not a bad girl—I swear to you I'm not. I know I've deceived you—and I'm sorry. I'm sorry—but I couldn't help it. I—I love him—and if you'd known, you'd have turned him from the house. Oh, can't you understand—won't you try to understand? He's a good man—and it can't be wrong to love him. Other women love—why must I be forbidden? I want love. Remember—remember how you loved Mama, and how she loved you—and—you'll understand and pity me ——
BARRETT. (*Inexorably.*) Get up!
HENR. (*Drops to floor again from his knees. Elizabeth sits on sofa.*) Have pity on me, Papa.
BARRETT. Get up. (*She brokenly rises.*) Sit there. (*He points to chair below desk* R. *She sits, he crosses to her.*) How long has this been going on? (*No answer.*) Do you hear me? How long have you been carrying on with this fellow? (*He stops up* L. *of Henrietta.*)
HENR. I—I've known him a little over a year.
BARRETT. And you've been with him often?
HENR. Yes.
BARRETT. Alone?
HENR. Yes.
BARRETT. Where?
HENR. We—I—I've met him in the Park, and—and ——
BARRETT. And—here?
HENR. Yes.
BARRETT. Here! And alone? (*Henrietta is silent.*) Have you met him in this house alone?
HENR. Yes.
BARRETT. So! Furtive unchastity under my roof. (*Turning to*

Elizabeth.) And abetted by one whom I believe to be wholly chaste and good ——

HENR. No—no.

ELIZ. (*Fiercely.*) How dare you, Papa!

BARRETT. Silence! (*To Henrietta.*) Now attend to me. Something like this happened a year or two ago, and I thought I had crushed the devil in you, then. I was wrong. It needed sterner measures than I had the courage to use. But now, unless I have your solemn word that you will neither see nor have any communication with this man again, you leave this house at once, as you are, with nothing but the clothes you have on. In which case you will be your own mistress and can go to perdition any way you please. But of this you may be certain. Once outside my doors you will never again be admitted under any pretext whatever, so long as I live. I think by this time you have learnt that it's not my habit to make idle threats, and that I never go back on my word. Very well. You have your choice. Take it.

HENR. (*After an agonized mental struggle.*) Is it nothing to you that I—that I shall hate you for this to the end of my life?

BARRETT. Less than nothing.

HENR. But—but I must let Captain Cook know that ——

BARRETT. No. I will deal with Captain Cook.

HENR. (*Desperately, dropping her head in her hands.*) But, Papa ——

BARRETT. Will you give me your word that you will neither see nor have any communication with this man again?

HENR. (*After a pause, in a choked voice.*) I—I have no choice ——

BARRETT. Give me your Bible, Elizabeth.

ELIZ. Why?

BARRETT. I am not prepared to accept your sister's bare promise, but I think even she would hesitate to break an oath made with her hand resting on the Word of God. Give me your Bible.

ELIZ. No. My Bible belonged to Mama. I can't have it used for such a purpose.

BARRETT. Give me your Bible!

ELIZ. No.

BARRETT. You refuse?

ELIZ. Yes. (*Without a word, Barrett crosses* L. *and pulls bell-*

rope, then stands tapping his fingers on mantel. A pause. No one speaks or moves, then Wilson enters.)

BARRETT. I want you to go to my bedroom and fetch my Bible. (*Wilson starts to go, he stops her.*) Are your hands clean?

WILSON. (*Bewildered, looks at her hands.*) My hands, sir?

BARRETT. Are they clean?

WILSON. (*With a touch of asperity.*) Yes, sir. I've just been helping to bathe Flush.

BARRETT. You will find the Bible on the table beside my bed.

WILSON. Very good, sir. (*She turns, exits. All are silent and motionless till she returns. After a moment she re-enters with Bible.*)

BARRETT. (*Pointing to desk* R. C.) Place it on the table. (*Wilson does so, turns and exits. Barrett crosses* R. *above sofa and* C. *chair to* R. *side of desk. To Henrietta.*) Stand up! (*Henrietta rises and goes to desk.*) Place your hand upon the book. (*She does so.*) Repeat after me: "I give you my solemn word that I will neither see, nor have any communication with Captain Cook again."

HENR. (*In a toneless voice.*) "I give you my solemn word that I will neither see, nor have any communication with Captain Cook again."

BARRETT. You will now go to your room and remain there until you have my permission to leave it. (*Without a word, but with head held high, Henrietta goes out. Barrett continues after a pause.*) Have you anything to say to me, Elizabeth?

ELIZ. (*In a dead voice.*) No.

BARRETT. Then I must leave you under my extreme displeasure. I shall not see you again. I can have nothing to do with you, until God has softened your heart, and you repent of your wickedness and ask His forgiveness—and mine. (*He picks up Bible and goes out. The moment he has closed door, Elizabeth gets up with an air of decision, crosses* L. *and pulls bell-rope. A pause, then Wilson enters.*)

ELIZ. (*Crossing to* C.) Shut the door, please. (*Impulsively, as Wilson does so.*) Wilson, are you my friend?

WILSON. (*Bewildered.*) Your—friend, Miss?

ELIZ. Yes, my friend. I am in dire need of friendship and help at the moment.

WILSON. I—I don't quite understand, Miss Ba—but I'm that fond of you, I'd do anything to help you.

ELIZ. You would? And I know I can trust you?
WILSON. Yes, indeed, Miss.
ELIZ. Wilson, next Saturday I am going to marry Mr. Browning.
WILSON. (*With a gasp.*) Marry ——
ELIZ. Hush! We're to be married secretly at Mary-le-Bone Church. Will you come with me?
WILSON. Me, Miss—yes, Miss—and gladly ——
ELIZ. Directly afterwards I shall return here for a few days, and ——
WILSON. (*In boundless amazement.*) Here! With Mr. Browning!
ELIZ. (*With a hysterical laugh.*) No—no—no! Just alone with you. Then on the following Saturday I shall join Mr. Browning, and we're going abroad. We're going to Italy. Will you come with us?
WILSON. (*In a whisper.*) To Italy ——?
ELIZ. Yes—will you come with me?
WILSON. Well, Miss, I can't see as how I can help myself. Not that I 'old with foreign parts—I don't. But 'usband or no 'usband, you'd never get to Italy alive without me.
ELIZ. Then you'll come? Then you'll come! Oh, I am so glad! I'll tell Mr. Browning—(*Crosses to desk* R. C., *takes out writing materials.*) I'm writing to him now. And I shall want you to take the letter to the post at once. Go and put on your things—I'll have finished by the time you're ready.
WILSON. Yes, Miss. (*Wilson goes out* R. *Elizabeth is writing as curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 2: *The scene is the same, with following few changes. Chair* C. *has been moved up to* C. *window. Lamp on desk* R. C. *has been taken away. Most of the books have been removed from small bookcase up* R. C. *Elizabeth's coat and hat are in wardrobe* R. *Nine letters written by Elizabeth to members of her family are on desk* R. C.

TIME: *The time is early evening.*

AT RISE: *Elizabeth is discovered kneeling beside Flush's basket, fastening a lead to his collar. She pats his head abstractedly, rises, picks up little pile of letters from desk* R. C., *runs through them, crosses and places them on mantel. Then with a shuddering sigh, she walks to window, clasping and unclasping her hands in agitation. After a moment she sighs again, crosses to mantel, picks up letters and crossing, places them one by one on desk* R. C. *again. After a moment Wilson enters, hurries in with two traveling rugs on her arm. Elizabeth at desk walks to upper armchair, crosses back to* L. *desk chair.*

WILSON. Ah, Miss Ba, I'm that sorry! In my flurry to get the luggage off to the railway station yesterday, I clean forgot to pack these rugs, and there was 'eaps of room in the carpet-bag. (*Crosses up to armchair* C. *where she places rugs.*)

ELIZABETH. Never mind.

WILSON. (*Putting rugs over back of chair.*) I do hope we haven't forgotten nothing else.

ELIZ. And if we have it won't matter much. Mr. Browning insisted that we should travel as lightly as possible. We shall be able to get all we need in Paris. (*Rises and walks to window up* R.)

WILSON. Lor', Miss, it don't seem possible we'll be in Paris tomorrow! (*Walks over* R. *to wardrobe.*)

ELIZ. No—— (*Consulting watch.*) Oh, how the time crawls. We've still an hour and a half of this dreadful waiting. You're sure, Wilson, they quite understood at the livery stables, exactly when, and where, the cab was to meet us?

WILSON. (*Taking Elizabeth's things from wardrobe.*) Oh, yes, Miss, I was most particular to see that the young man took it all down—the cab to be at the corner of Wimpole Street at ha' past three, punctual. It won't take us more than ten minutes to get to Hodgson's Library, and then Mr. Browning will 'ave us in his charge. (*Drops voice to a warm conversational tone, comes to above desk.*) Your 'usband, Miss Ba, dear——

ELIZ. (*Coming to her.*) Oh, hush! Hush! Don't breathe that word here——

WILSON. But, Miss Ba——

ELIZ. I'm foolishly nervous, but I can't help it. The very walls seem to be listening.
WILSON. There is no one in the house except Miss Henrietta. She was putting on her bonnet as I came along the passage, so she should have gone out by now. (*Wilson gets bag and hat from wardrobe.*)
ELIZ. Oh, Wilson, it's impossible to believe that in a little more than an hour I shall have left this room, never in all likelihood to see it again.
WILSON. (*From* R. U. *corner of desk.*) And glad you'll be to see the last of it, I'm sure, Miss Ba.
ELIZ. Yes—and no. I've been very miserable here, and very happy. Oh, I wish it were time to go! This waiting is killing me. (*Moves to* L. *side of desk and sits in chair.*)
WILSON. Have you finished writing your letters, Miss?
ELIZ. (*Almost hysterically.*) Yes. Yes. I've written to them all. I've just been reading over my letter to Mr. Barrett to see if there was something I could add—something—anything. But I can't think—I can't think ——
WILSON. Least said, soonest mended, Miss. (*With chuckling laugh.*) Oh, Miss Ba, I know I shouldn't say such things—but there's a lot I'd give to be here tonight when the Master reads your letter.
ELIZ. The very thought terrifies me. I can see his face—I can hear his voice. (*Rises, crosses below sofa to mantel* L.) Thank God, we shall be miles and miles away. (*Looks at watch.*) An hour and twenty minutes still —— Will time never pass?
WILSON. Why don't you write some poetry, Miss?
ELIZ. (*Turns dumbfounded, comes* R. *below couch.*) Poetry ——?
WILSON. Yes, Miss. That'll make the time pass nicely, I know. (*Elizabeth bursts into laughter, as Henrietta in bonnet and shawl enters with letter in hand. Elizabeth looks at her frightened.*)
ELIZ. (*Turning her letters on their faces.*) I—I thought you had gone out.
HENR. (*Crossing to below desk.*) Wilson, I want to speak to Miss Ba.
WILSON. Yes, Miss. (*Crosses, exits, closing door.*)
HENR. (*Crossing to Elizabeth.*) I was just going out when I ran into a messenger at the door. He brought this letter—it's for you.
ELIZ. (*Anxiously, reaching for letter.*) For me?

HENR. (*Retaining letter.*) Yes. But it's in—in *his* handwriting.
ELIZ. Captain Cook's?
HENR. Yes.
ELIZ. Open it, dear. (*She sits on* C. *of sofa* L. C.)
HENR. (*Tears open letter and reads.*) "Dear Miss Barrett, I know I am doing very wrong in drawing you once again into my and Henrietta's affairs. But the matter is so urgent I am sure you will forgive me. My regiment has been ordered to Somerset at short notice, and I must positively see Henrietta before I go. If I wrote to her directly, my letter would certainly be read by Mr. Barrett. I understand he opens all her correspondence. Hence my trespass on your kindness. Will you please give Henrietta the enclosed letter, and believe me your grateful and obedient servant, Surtees Cook." (*She lets letter drop to floor, while she opens enclosure, which she reads eagerly. Elizabeth picks up letter from floor, tears it into bits, and throws them into fireplace* L.) You remember Papa threatened to turn me out of the house unless I swore on the Bible not to write to or see Surtees?
ELIZ. (*Turning to face her.*) Yes.
HENR. Well—I am going to break that "Bible oath" today!
ELIZ. (*Quietly.*) Are you, dear?
HENR. Yes—and I shall glory in breaking it! And if Papa asks where I have been, I shall go out of my way to lie to him as often and as grossly as I can.
ELIZ. (*Quietly.*) I see. But why do you tell me this?
HENR. (*Fiercely.*) Because I want you to say that I'm a wicked, deceitful, perjured, *loose* woman, so that I can fling the words back in your face. (*Elizabeth crosses to her, and Henrietta suddenly flings her arms round Elizabeth.*) Oh, Ba, darling, forgive me! I'm not myself these days. I am all love and hate—and I don't know which is the worst torture.
ELIZ. (*With passionate tenderness, arms about Henrietta.*) My dear, you think I don't understand! I do—I do. And I feel for you and pity you with all my heart. I can do nothing to help you—I daren't even advise you. But never lose hope—never lose courage—never —— (*Wilson enters quickly, in great agitation.*)
WILSON. Oh, Miss Ba—Miss Ba ——! The Master! (*They stare at Wilson, Henrietta in amazement, Elizabeth in terror.*)
ELIZ. Shut the door!
WILSON. (*As she does so, then crosses to Elizabeth.*) He's just

come in—just this minute. He must 'ave heard—someone must 'ave told him ——

ELIZ. Be quiet. (*Wilson steps back up a little.*)

HENR. (*In amazement.*) But, Ba, what on earth is the matter?

ELIZ. Nothing—nothing! It's—it's only that Papa hasn't been to see me for ten days now—ever since—you remember? And—and scenes of forgiveness are always trying. (*To Wilson.*) Put away my hat and cloak quick. (*Wilson does so, in wardrobe* R.)

HENR. (*Crossing to Elizabeth.*) I don't believe that's all. You're as white as a sheet. What did Wilson mean? Ba, is there anything I can ——?

ELIZ. (*Softly, intensely.*) No—no—no! Don't speak—don't ask me anything. You know nothing—you understand? Nothing—nothing!

HENR. But ——

ELIZ. (*To Wilson.*) Those rugs ——! (*Wilson picks up rugs from chair up* C. *A knock at door* R. *Wilson gasps. Elizabeth answers in a whisper, turning towards fireplace* L.) Come in. (*Clears her throat, then louder.*) Come in. (*Turning from fireplace* R. *They are standing in tense attitudes when Barrett enters* R. *to* R. *below desk. Henrietta is watching Elizabeth, who commands her voice.*) You're home early, Papa. (*Barrett, without replying, looks at each of the three in turn, then crosses to front of fireplace* L. *Wilson, obviously terror-stricken, crosses above desk, exits with rugs over her arm.*)

BARRETT. (*To Elizabeth.*) What's the matter with that girl?

ELIZ. Wilson?

BARRETT. Yes.

ELIZ. Nothing, Papa ——

BARRETT. (*After staring broodingly at her for a moment, crosses to Henrietta.*) Where have you been?

HENR. Nowhere.

BARRETT. Where are you going?

HENR. To tea with Aunt Hedley.

BARRETT. Is that the truth?

HENR. Yes.

BARRETT. You remember your oath?

HENR. Yes.

BARRETT. Have you kept it?

HENR. Yes.

BARRETT. Are you going to keep it?
HENR. Yes.
BARRETT. I wish to speak to your sister—you can go. (*Without a glance at either of them Henrietta crosses, exits, closing door. Elizabeth stands at fireplace. Barrett walks to armchair up* C. *and turns.*) Do you know why I am back so early?
ELIZ. (*In a whisper.*) No, Papa.
BARRETT. (*In a low intense voice.*) Because I could bear it no longer. It's ten days since last I saw you.
ELIZ. Am I to blame for that, Papa?
BARRETT. You dare to ask me such a question? Weren't you a party to your sister's shameless conduct? Haven't you encouraged her? And did you expect to go scot-free of my displeasure? (*Stopping himself with a violent gesture, comes* L. *down to below sofa.*) I've not come to speak about that—but to put it behind me—to forget it! I wonder, my child—have you been half so miserable these last ten days as your Father?
ELIZ. Miserable, Papa?
BARRETT. Do you think I can be happy when I'm bitterly estranged from all I love in the world? Do you know that night after night I had to call up all my will-power to hold me from coming here to forgive you?
ELIZ. Papa ——
BARRETT. All my will-power, I tell you—all my sense of duty, and right, and justice. But today I could bear it no longer. The want of your face and your voice became a torment. I had to come. (*Sits on* C. *of sofa.*) I am not so strong as they think me—I had to come—and I despise myself for coming, despise myself, hate myself ——
ELIZ. (*Crossing to sit* L. *of him on sofa, puts hands on his shoulders.*) Oh, Papa, can't you see, won't you ever see, that strength may be weakness, and your sense of justice and right and duty may be mistaken and wrong?
BARRETT. (*In a tense voice, putting her hands off his shoulders.*) Mistaken and wrong? What do you mean? (*Quickly stopping her.*) No, be silent. Don't answer me. Mistaken and wrong? You don't know what you're saying.
ELIZ. If you'll only listen to me, Papa, I ——
BARRETT. No.
ELIZ. But, Papa ——

BARRETT. No! (*Crosses below her to fireplace, stands half turned away. A pause; his voice calm as he continues.*) If there were even a vestige of truth in what you say, my whole life would be a hideous mockery. For always, through all misfortunes and miseries, I've been upheld by knowing beyond a doubt what was right, and doing it unflinchingly, however bitter the consequences. And bitter they've been—how bitter only God knows. It's been my heavy cross that those whom I was given to guide and rule have always fought against the right that I knew to be the right, and was in duty bound to impose upon them. Even you. Even your Mother.

ELIZ. (*In a whisper, turning to him.*) My Mother?

BARRETT. (*His back to fireplace.*) Yes, your Mother. But not at first. You—you, my eldest child, were born of love, and only love. But the others—long before they came, the rift began to open between your Mother and me. Not that she ever opposed me—never once. Or put into words what she felt. She was silent, and dutiful, and obedient. But love died out, and fear took its place ——

ELIZ. (*A whisper.*) Oh, dear God, what she must have suffered!

BARRETT. She? She? And what of me?

ELIZ. You? Oh, Papa, then you loved her after her love for you had died?

BARRETT. (*Embarrassed, looking aside.*) Love? What's love? She was my wife. You—you don't understand ——

ELIZ. (*In same horrified whisper.*) And all those children—born in fear! Oh, it's horrible—it's horrible ——! (*Covers face with her hands.*)

BARRETT. (*Embarrassed, taking a couple of steps toward her.*) Ba, my dear—don't—don't. I shouldn't have spoken—I shouldn't have told you all that. Forget it, my child. (*Crosses to her.*) Take your hands from your face. (*Gently takes her wrists, she starts away from him with frightened eyes.*) Don't look at me like that. (*In a low thick voice, averting his eyes.*) You don't understand. How should you? You know nothing of the brutal tyranny of passion, and how the strongest and best are driven by it to hell. You would have abetted your sister in her ——

ELIZ. Henrietta's love—how dare you speak of it in the same breath as ——

BARRETT. Her love? You ignorant little fool! What do *you* know

of love? Love! The lust of the eye—the lowest urge of the body!
ELIZ. (*Starting to rise.*) I won't listen to you.
BARRETT. (*Taking her hands and putting her down again.*) You must—you shall! Do you suppose I should have guarded this house like a dragon from this so-called love, if I hadn't known from my own life all it entails of cruelty and loathing, and degradation and remorse? With the help of God, and through years of tormenting abstinence, I strangled it myself. And so long as there's breath in my body, I'll keep it away from those I was given to protect and care for. You understand me?
ELIZ. (*A low voice, looking him in the face.*) Yes—I understand you.
BARRETT. (*Turns away from her. She sits quite still looking straight before her.*) This has been a hateful necessity. I had to speak plainly, but we must turn over this ugly page and forget what was on it.
ELIZ. (*Drawing her hand from his.*) I shall never forget what you said!
BARRETT. Never—perhaps that's as well. (*With sudden urgency, sits* L. *of her on sofa.*) But for God's sake, my darling, don't let this raise any further barrier between us! Your love is all I have left to me in the world.
ELIZ. You had Mamma's love once—you might have had the love of all your children.
BARRETT. Yes, if I'd played the coward's part, taken the easier way, shirked my duty. I'd rather be hated by the whole world than gain love like that.
ELIZ. Oh, Papa, you don't know how I pity you!
BARRETT. Pity? I don't want your pity, but if I should ever lose you, or if I should ever lose your love —— (*He seizes her unwilling hands.*) Ba, my darling, next week we shall have left this house. I've grown to loathe it—even this room has become hateful to me. In our new home we shall draw close to each other again. There will be little to distract you in the country—nothing and no one to come between us. (*He draws her stiffening form into his arms.*) My child, my darling, you must look up to me and depend on me, lean on me. You must share your thoughts with me, your hopes, your fears, your prayers. I want all your heart and all your soul. (*He draws her passionately close to him. She leans away from him, her face drawn with fear and pain.*)

ELIZ. (*Sobbingly.*) I can't bear it—I can't bear any more. Let me go, Papa—please let me go! (*He releases her, she stands aside, her arm covering her face.*)
BARRETT. Forgive me, dear—I was carried away. I'll leave you now.
ELIZ. (*In a whisper.*) Please ——
BARRETT. (*Rising.*) Shall I see you again tonight?
ELIZ. (*As before.*) Not tonight.
BARRETT. I shall pray for you.
ELIZ. (*Half to herself.*) Pray for me? Tonight? Yes, pray for me tonight—if you will. (*He touches her forehead gently, goes out. Elizabeth sits a moment staring before her, then with frightened eyes around the room, she whispers.*) I must go at once—I must go—I must go —— (*Rises quickly, gets cloak and bonnet from wardrobe* R. *Wilson enters stealthily and hurriedly, rugs on her arm.*)
WILSON. He's gone to the study.
ELIZ. (*Putting on her bonnet.*) We must go—now—at once!!
WILSON. But, Miss Ba ——
ELIZ. (*Crossing to* C.) At once! Help me on with my cloak.
WILSON. (*Doing so.*) But the cab won't be there yet—not for an hour. Besides ——
ELIZ. (*Walking down* C.) Then we must walk the streets. I can't stay here any longer. I'm frightened—I'm frightened. Fetch your cloak and bonnet. Quick!
WILSON. Walk about the streets, Miss? You can't—you can't! Besides, the Master's at home—he may see us leaving ——
ELIZ. (*Crossing* R. *to desk, arranging letters.*) He can't stop me. I don't belong to him any more—I belong to my husband. Papa can kill me, but he can't stop me!
WILSON. I daren't, Miss—I daren't!
ELIZ. Then I must go alone!
WILSON. You can't do that!
ELIZ. (*With compelling earnestness, turning* L. *to face Wilson.*) Wilson—things have passed between my father and me which force me to leave this house at once. Until today I've never really known him. He's not like other men—he's dreadfully different. I —I can't say any more. If you draw back, you need never reproach yourself. But I must go now.
WILSON. I'll fetch my hat and cloak, at once, Miss. (*Elizabeth*

puts her arm about her neck and kisses her.) Oh, Miss Ba —— *(Crosses* R., *exits quickly. Elizabeth turns* R., *spreads out letters on desk, then from a ribbon on which it is hung she draws her wedding ring from her bosom, and slips it onto her finger. She looks at it a moment, then slowly draws on her gloves. Wilson re-enters quickly and softly in cloak and bonnet.)*

ELIZ. *(Coming around* L. *below desk.)* I am quite ready. You take the rugs, Wilson—I had better carry Flush.

WILSON. *(Breathlessly.)* Yes, Miss. *(Gets Flush from basket and gives him to Elizabeth.)*

ELIZ. And now just slip downstairs and see whether the study door is shut.

WILSON. Very well, Miss. *(She exits quickly, leaving door open. Elizabeth, with an indescribable expression on her face, stands with Flush under her arm, and looks about room. Wilson re-enters speaking in a breathless whisper.)* Yes, Miss—the door is shut, and all is quiet.

ELIZ. Very well. *(Speaking to Flush as she goes.)* If you bark now, Flush, we're lost! *(She passes out, exits, Wilson follows, closing door softly after her. The room stands empty for a moment, then lights slowly dim down and out to darkness.)*

(A period of darkness for thirty seconds to indicate the passage of an hour or more of time, then lights slowly come back. After lights are up, a moment's pause, then Arabel enters.)

ARABEL. Ba dear, I want —— *(Realizes the room's emptiness, and looks bewilderedly about, exits and immediately returns with lamp which she places on upper end of desk* R. C., *where she sees letters Elizabeth has left. Picks one up in agitation, and whispers.)* For me—what can it mean? *(Sits in chair by desk* R. C., *tears letter open, reads it with little gasping exclamations.)* Oh—No! No! Married!—No! Oh—Oh! Married! Gone —— *(She looks up from letter, her face transformed in excitement, crosses to sofa and sits, then suddenly goes off into shrieks and peals of laughter. After a moment the voices and hurriedly approaching footsteps of George, Charles, Octavius, are heard outside* R., *and they hurriedly enter* R.)

GEORGE. (*As they enter, crosses, running, sits* L. *of Arabel on sofa* L. C.) Arabel! For Heaven's sake!
CHARLES. (*Crossing, sits* R. *of her on sofa.*) What is it?
GEORGE. Arabel! What on earth?
OCTAVIUS. (*Who had crossed to above sofa.*) High-strikes! B-by Jove! (*Arabel continues laughing.*)
GEORGE. (*Slapping one of her hands.*) Stop that, Arabel! Stop it at once!
ARABEL. (*Half gasping, half-shrieking.*) Married—gone! Married —gone! (*Another wild peal of laughter.*)
GEORGE. Be quiet! (*Slaps her hand again.*) Fetch some water, someone! (*Rises, starts up* R. *of sofa.*)
OCT. Eau-de-cologne —— (*Crosses up to dressing-table up* L. C. *Alfred, Henry, Septimus, two dressed, other without coat and collar, enter quickly.*)
ALFRED. (*Crossing to* R. *of sofa.*) What's the matter?
HENRY. Is Ba ill? Arabel!
ARABEL. (*Gaspingly.*) She's married—she's gone—married—gone —— (*Henrietta enters in cloak and bonnet. Stands a moment taking in scene, as Arabel continues.*) Married and gone—married and gone —— (*She moans and sobs. Realization begins to dawn on others.*)
CHARLES. What does she mean? Where's Ba?
ARABEL. Married and gone!
SEPT. Married and gone—she's mad!
GEORGE. (*Taking Arabel's shoulders.*) Arabel—what do you mean?
OCT. Married!
HENR. (*Suddenly pushing them aside, seizes Arabel by shoulders, shakes her vigorously.*) Arabel—Arabel! Pull yourself together at once! Where's Ba? Answer me! Where's Ba?
ARABEL. She—she's m-m-married Mr. Robert Browning ——
HENR. (*In a whisper.*) Married —— (*Consternation among others and amazed exclamations: "Married!" "Married!" "It can't be true!"—"Robert Browning." "Good God!" etc. Henrietta continues to Arabel, who is still sobbing.*) Where is she?
ARABEL. (*Indicating letters on desk.*) She—she's gone! Those letters—she's written to—to—all of us! She—she's gone —— (*Octavius crosses to desk, followed by Alfred, Henry, and Septimus. Alfred takes his letter up* C. *Henry goes up* R. C. *Septimus*

goes down R. *by desk. Henrietta gets her letter, crosses to* R. *of sofa.*)

GEORGE. (*From above sofa* L.) Yes—she was married last Saturday.

OCT. (*From* L. *of desk, holding up a letter.*) And this one is for P-papa. (*There is a frightened silence, only Henrietta looks before her with a frightened smile on her face.*)

ARABEL. (*In a shuddering whisper.*) P-p-papa ——!

SEPT. Is he in?

GEORGE. He's dressing for dinner.

OCT. What's to be d-done?

HENRY. Someone must give him Ba's letter.

HENR. Let me—I should love to.

ARABEL. (*In a whisper.*) Oh, hush—hush ——! (*She tremblingly indicates door, and all stand breathless. Footsteps are heard approaching. Barrett, in evening dress, appears on threshold as he enters.*)

BARRETT. (*Looks at assembled family in stern amazement, no one stirs.*) What is the meaning of this? (*No one stirs or replies.*) Who was making that hideous noise just now? (*Still no one stirs or replies, he continues sharply.*) Where is Elizabeth? (*A silence, he crosses* L. C. *to* R. *of Henrietta. Arabel rises, clings to Henrietta's arm.*) Do you hear me? (*To Henrietta.*) Where is your sister?

HENR. (*Freeing herself from Arabel, hands Barrett his letter.*) She left you this letter.

BARRETT. (*Without touching it, in a low voice, his face a dreadful mask.*) Left me? What do you mean?

HENR. She left letters for all of us—this is yours. (*Arabel sits* R. *on sofa. Barrett, his eyes fixed on Henrietta's face, takes letter and is about to open it, when she suddenly springs forward and seizes his arm, continuing passionately and entreatingly.*) You must forgive her, Papa—you must forgive her—not for her sake—but for yours. I thought I hated you—but I don't. I pity you—I pity you! And if you've any pity on yourself—forgive her. (*He looks at her steadily for a moment, then pushes her aside. He opens and reads letter. No one stirs. Nothing but the fury of his quickened breathing shows his emotions. He starts as if to collapse, Henrietta and Octavius go to him; he pushes them aside. He turns and walks up* C. *to window, quite steadily, but his gait gives the impression*

that he is blind. He stands in front of window, his back to room, his hands tightly clasped behind him, grasping letter. The movement of his shoulders shows that he is breathing quickly and heavily. No one stirs.)

BARRETT. (*Half to himself, turning from window.*) Yes—yes—her dog. (*An ugly smile flickers across his face.*) Yes—I'll have her dog —— (*Walks down* C.) Octavius!

OCT. Sir?

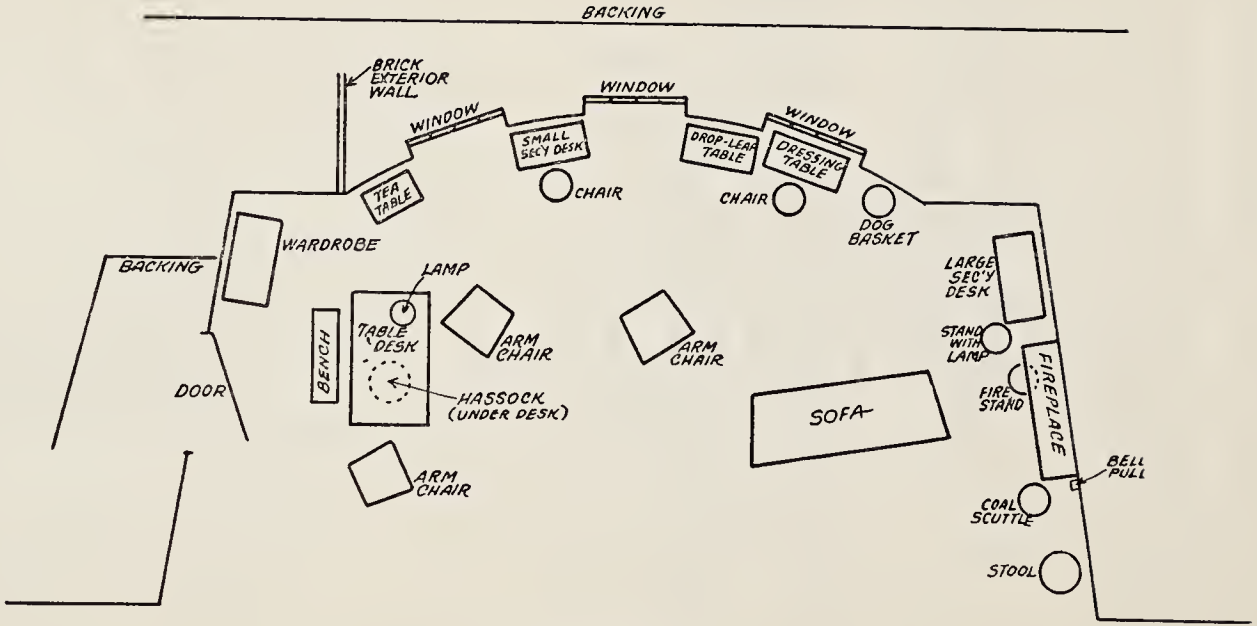
BARRETT. Her dog must be destroyed! At once! (*Slightly raising his voice.*) You will take it to the vet—tonight! You understand me? Tonight! (*A pause.*) You understand me!

OCT. (*Desperately.*) I really d-don't see what the poor little beast has d-done to ——

BARRETT. (*Ominously.*) You understand me?

HENR. (*Vainly trying to control the triumph in her voice.*) In her letter to me, Ba writes that she has taken Flush with her! (*Barrett's face once more becomes a still white mask. He stands perfectly still, staring straight before him, mechanically tearing letter into little pieces which drop to his feet, as curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN



SCENE DESIGN

"THE BARRETTS OF WIMPOLE STREET"

PROPERTIES

The following property list is that used in the McClintic production. It will be noted that many properties are described which were used in production for purposes of dressing the stage and establishing a distinct atmosphere. A great many of these properties are not necessary and some not important except for the purpose of creating atmosphere. The actual requirements affecting stage processings and properties are extremely limited.

On Stage Properties

Full-stage green background, large-figured carpet on floor of set.

Small oblong rug on floor beside desk R. C.

On Walls and Windows:

In hall off R. large dark, oil portrait of woman.

Pair of floor length, dark lace curtains with tie-backs, on each of the three windows in back wall.

Tightly drawn glass curtains on rods top and bottom, on lower sash of each of three windows in back wall.

Pair of floor length, terra-cotta colored pull-off drapes with cords, and with tie-backs, with valance to match, on each of three windows.

Small square tapestry of figures on black background, in old gold frame, on back wall up R. C. over small secretary desk, between windows.

Pair of small hanging bookshelves filled with books, on back wall up L. C. between windows.

Small plaster plaque of bearded face on back wall below bookshelves between windows up L. C.

Tapestry bell-pull hanging from ceiling against side wall of chimney, down L.

Pair of small hanging bookshelves filled with books, up L. C., on wall down L.

Small upright dark framed plaster plaque of male head on wall below above bookshelves, down L.

Furniture:

In hall off R., three foot oblong mahogany table against R. side wall.

Two dark frame, rush bottom, straight chairs, with loose flowered cushions on seats, against R. side wall above and below above table.

Huge, dark mahogany, shell inlaid, wardrobe cabinet with mirror

door, hooks inside, used to hang clothing during play.

Small square tea-table against back wall up R.

Small secretary desk with open bookshelves against back wall up R. C. between windows.

A small oblong drop-leaf table against back wall up L. C. below hanging shelves between windows.

A mahogany dressing table with small oval swinging mirror is in front of window in back wall up L.

A low oval shape wicker dog-basket is against back wall in corner up L.

A large massive secretary desk with glass on shelves, is against side wall up L.

A small square stand is by lower end of above desk just above fireplace.

At upper end of fireplace down L. is a brass stand with shovel, tongs, and poker.

A low brass fender rail is below the fireplace, in front of it.

A black, brass mounted scuttle of coal is below the fireplace down L.

Down in extreme L. corner is a carved leg stool with a tapestry upholstered top.

A large oblong table desk is up and down stage at R. C.

A large green upholstered couch, with low straight back, and sharply upturned head and foot is angled on stage at L. C.

An oblong, upholstered top bench is at R. of above desk.

A straight armchair with carved arms, seat and back of which are upholstered in green is at R. C., at L. of above desk, with loose cushion on seat.

A small round tapestry beaded top footstool is beneath above desk.

At R. C. below above desk, and also at C. stand two bent wood-arm chairs, carved imitation of bamboo, with scoop seats upholstered in yellow.

Up R. C. before small secretary desk, and also up L. C., before dressing table, are two carved back walnut straight chairs, with upholstered figured silk seats.

On Wardrobe in Room R.:

Plaster cast of bearded male head on top of Cabinet.

On Small Tea-Table up R.:

Number of books and pamphlets, also some on floor beside it.

On Small Secretary desk up R. C.:

Books and pamphlets.

On small Drop-Leaf table up L. C.:

Several books and MS pamphlets.

On Dressing-table up L. C.:

Linen and lace cover.

Two small china painted pomade jars.

Two blue glass decorated tumblers.

A red glass, covered powder jar.

Small round red glass tray.

Blue and white glass toilet water bottle with stopper.

In Dog Basket up L.:

Leather leash fastened to basket.

Old cushion.

On Large Secretary Desk up L.:

Plaster cast of male head on top.

Books filling shelves.

Number of books and MSS on desk.

On Mantel over fireplace L.:

Two single candles each in single brass candlestick with two tall glass chimneys around them.

Small white marble statuette of a half-opened shell.

Small round mirror in old gold frame in square shadow box on wall above.

On Large Table Desk at R. C.:

Several piles of books, and one very large book.

Large square brown leather covered inkwell.

Green feather quill pen.

Several written pamphlets.

Black sand shaker.

Copy of "London Times."

Large brown leather portfolio with paper and envelopes.

Tall china, painted lamp, with blue glass globe. (Elec.)

On Small Stand L. *by fireplace:*

Duplicate lamp to the above.

Off Stage—Used and Side Props

Off up R. C. *and* L. C. *outside the windows:*

A large ivy vine seen climbing up the outer edges of each of the two windows.

Off up R. C. *and* C. *outside windows:*

Two flower boxes each of geraniums.

Off R.:

Oval japanned tray, with two plates, remains of toast, custard pudding in bouillon cup, and pewter mug, all go on scene in Act I.

Two cushions, knitted couch spread, yellow silk shawl, grey knitted shawl, to go on couch.

Two traveling shawls.

Large old Bible off in hall up R.

One sealed, received letter from Cook.

One open letter from Papa.

On stage:

Four addressed and stamped letters to be sent, in portfolio on desk R. C.

Five received written letters, sealed, on desk R. C.

Nine notes to family on desk R. C., the one to Papa on extra heavy stiff paper.

Bowl of tulips on drop leaf table brought down behind couch L. C. in Act I, Scene 2.

Large tall glass vase of assorted flowers on drop leaf table up L. C., in Acts II and III.

Small gold trimmed urn shaped vase of assorted flowers on big desk R. C., Acts II and III.

Small bottle medicine, glass and spoon on dressing table up L. C., Act I.

Books from tea table up R., are on floor beside it Act I.

Some of the books from wall shelves up R. C. in desk and from table R. C. are taken off R. for Act III, Scene 2.

WORKING NOTES FOR PROPERTIES

Act I—Scene 1

Sofa Points D. *On sofa:*

Yellow shawl—knit coverlet—two pillows—leather portfolio.

On Desk:

Dinner tray with remains of dinner and pewter tankard—lamp.

Lamp stand and lamp moved from L. wall to behind L. U. corner of sofa.

Curtains are down, and R. window blind is lowered.

Medicine, spoon, glass, and pitcher, on the dressing table up L. C.

Tulips in vase, and copy of "Sordello" on L. U. table.

Act I—Scene 2

Remove casters of sofa.

Lamp and stand moved back L.

Table between windows up L. C. moved down to below sofa with vase of tulips.

Small table from up R. moved down to below sofa—on it dinner tray with untouched dessert.

Sofa points U.—leather portfolio on it—coverlet moved to U. R. desk chair.

Yellow shawl is struck.

Pewter tankard struck from mantel.

Act II

Sofa points D.—everything on it is struck.

Desk made untidy, with papers, books, etc.

Medicine, glass, spoon, and pitcher struck from dressing table up L. C.

Flowers placed on desk and U. L. table.

Tables moved back to original positions.

Act III—Scene 1

Sofa straight.

Book placed on mantel.

Stool L. D. is moved about two feet on stage.

Desk is tidied up.

Flowers are struck.

Five letters for Elizabeth on desk.

Act III—Scene 2

Nine letters written by Elizabeth to each member of her family on desk.

Elizabeth's coat and hat in wardrobe.

Books are removed from R. U. desk bookcase.

Lamp on desk is struck off-stage.

C. chair moved upstage to U. C. window.

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